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By

Mrs. Margaret Anderson

WITHOUT THROWING AWAY HIS CIGAR, OR EVEN LIFTING HIS HAT, THIS FINE YOUNG GENTLEMAN BEGAN TO TALK WITH THE IDEAL BEING

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

IN TWENTY-FIVE VOLUMES

The First Complete Translation into English

PROVINCIAL PARISIANS

TRANSLATED BY

LIONEL STRACHEY

Volume Sixteen

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS FROM DRAWINGS ON THE WOOD
BY FAMOUS FRENCH ARTISTS

New York

PETER FENELON COLLIER & SON

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PROVINCIAL PARISIANS

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PART THE FIRST

THE TOURNIQUET SAINT-JEAN, whose description was elaborated at the appropriate time in the beginning of the study entitled "A Second Home"—this relic of old Paris no longer exists but in the printed record aforesaid. The erection of the Hotel de Ville, such as it stands to-day, swept away a whole precinct.

In 1830, passers-by might still observe the turnstile painted on the wine merchant's sign, but the house itself has since been torn down. Old Paris, alas! was disappearing very fast. Here and there, in this work, will be found an occasional dwelling of medieval type, like that mentioned at the commencement of "At the Sign of the Cat and Racket," and of which a few specimens are still in existence; or again we shall find a house like Judge Popinot's, Rue de Fouarre, of old middle-class type. Here are the remains of the Fulbert house, there is the whole port of the Seine under Charles IX. Why should not the historian of French society, like another Old Mortality, save these strange messages from the past, just as Walter Scott's old man drew life from the tombstones? For the last ten years, certainly, the protests of literature have not been superfluous: art is beginning to conceal the hideous fronts of business houses in Paris, which one of our poets humorously compares to wardrobes.

Let us remark here that the municipal "Ornament" board, which in Milan regulates the architecture of house fronts, and to which every property owner is obliged to submit the plan of his house, dates from the twelfth century. And who has not noticed the results, in that beautiful capital, of the civic pride of middle class and aristocracy when contemplating buildings full of character and originality? The ugly spirit of gain, which from year to year lowers ceilings, cuts up interior space, and wages war to the death upon gardens, must necessarily influence Parisian habits. People will soon be forced to live more out of doors than in. The sacredness of private life, the liberty of the home, where are they? They begin with an income of fifty thousand francs a year. And even as it is, few millionnaires indulge in the luxury of a small mansion with a courtyard intervening between it and the street, and protected from the public gaze by a shady garden.

When the Code undertook to meddle with inheritances and to equalize private fortunes, it produced these stone monstrosities that lodge thirty families and yield a return of a hundred thousand francs a year. And so, in fifty years, we shall be able to count the houses of the style of that inhabited by the Thuillier family at the opening of this story. It is a really curious abode, and deserves the distinction of a minute description, were it only for the sake of contrasting the middle classes of the past with those of the present day. The situation and appearance of the house, which is to be the frame of this picture of manners and morals, carry a lower middle-class aroma which may attract or repel, according to the taste of the individual reader.

To begin with, the house belonged to neither Monsieur

nor Madame, but to Mademoiselle Thuillier, Monsieur Thuillier's oldest sister. Acquired in the first six months after the Revolution of 1830 by Mademoiselle Marie-Jeanne-Brigitte Thuillier, then of age, this house stands, about the middle of the Rue Saint-Dominique-d'Enfer, and on the right-hand side coming down from the Rue d'Enfer, in such a position that the main building, occupied by Monsieur Thuillier, is exposed to the southern sun.

The steady movement of the Parisian population to the heights on the left bank of the Seine from the right had for some time been injuring the sale of property in the so-called Latin quarter, when certain reasons, which will appear from Monsieur Thuillier's character and habits, induced his sister to purchase land. She bought this estate for the trifling capital of forty-six thousand francs, with subsidiary outlays of six thousand francs, the whole amounting to fifty-two thousand francs. A detailed account of the property in advertisement fashion, and of the results of Monsieur Thuillier's exertions, will show how so many fortunes matured in July, 1830, while so many others foundered.

On the street side, the house presented a weather-beaten, rough-cast plaster front, grooved with the trowel in imitation of freestone. This kind of front is so familiar to Paris, and so ugly, that the city ought to offer prizes to landholders building in stone and devising new fronts. This grayish wall, provided with seven windows, was three stories high and topped with garrets roofed with tiles. The courtyard gate, large and substantial, showed by its construction that the main building facing the street dated from Empire days, when the Enfer precinct still enjoyed some favor.

On one side was the porter's box, on the other the main

stairway. Two buildings joined to the next houses had once served as coach houses, stables, and servants' quarters, but since 1830 had been converted into shops.

The right side was rented by a wholesale stationer, called Monsieur Métivier the nephew, the left side by a bookseller named Barbet. The offices of both tradesmen were situated over their shops, and the bookseller lived on the first floor, the stationer on the second of the large house fronting the street. Métivier the nephew, more commission agent than merchant, and Barbet, more broker than bookseller, respectively held these large warehouses to keep stationary bought in bulk from embarrassed manufacturers, and sets of books left as security for loans.

The shark librarian and the pike stationer lived on perfectly amicable terms, and their transactions, devoid of the bustle belonging to the retail business, brought few vehicles into the quiet courtyard, from between whose paving-stones the porter sometimes weeded up tufts of grass. Monsieur Barbet and Monsieur Métivier, who scarcely do more than figure as supernumeraries in this story, rendered their landlords visits at rare intervals, and because of their punctuality in meeting their rent were ranked as good tenants; they passed for very honest people in the eyes of the Thuillier circle.

As for the third story facing the street, it comprised two apartments. One was occupied by Monsieur Dutocq, clerk of the court and superannuated government official, a frequenter of the Thuillier household. The other was inhabited by the hero of this sketch. But we must for the moment be satisfied with stating the amount of his rental, seven hundred francs, and his position in this centre three years before the curtain rises on this domestic drama.

The clerk of the court, a bachelor of fifty, lived in the larger of the two apartments on the third story; he kept a cook and paid one thousand francs rent. Two years after her purchase, Mademoiselle Thuillier took seven thousand two hundred francs in revenue from a house which the former proprietor had furnished with shutters, renewed inside, and adorned with mirrors, without being able to either let or sell it, and the Thuilliers, quite grandly lodged, as will be seen, were sporting themselves in one of the finest gardens of that ward, whose trees even shaded the little deserted Rue Neuve-Sainte Cathérine. Standing between the court and the garden, their dwelling seemed to have been the caprice of some commoner grown rich, under Louis XIV., of a parliamentary president, or of a quiet student. Its handsome freestone, worn by the wind and the weather, had about it a certain air of Louis XIV. grandeur; the courses were imitated by grooves; the red brick panelling reminds one of the stables at Versailles; the arched windows had masks, by way of ornamentation, over the keystone and under the sill. The door finally, with its little panes through which the garden was visible, was of that plain, unpretentious make often employed for the porter's lodge in royal palaces.

This five-windowed lodge was two stories above the ground floor, and had a pyramid-shaped roof pointing to a weathercock, and pierced with tall chimneys and oval skylights. Perhaps this structure was the remains of some great mansion, though nothing has been found on the maps of old Paris to substantiate this conjecture, and Mademoiselle Thuillier's title-deeds, moreover, specified as owner Petitot, the celebrated enamel painter in the time of Louis XIV., who had derived the property from President Le-

camus. It is probable that the president lived in this lodge while having his famous house built in the Rue de Thorigny.

So the legal robe and the artist's brush had both passed over the place. And then, what a broad sense of comfort and pleasure had ordered over the interior arrangements! Entering the square hall that forms a closed vestibule, you have at your right the foot of a stone staircase, with two windows upon the garden; under the staircase is the door to the cellar. The vestibule communicates with the dining-room, which is lighted from the courtyard. This dining-room adjoins a kitchen opening into Barbet's storerooms. Behind the staircase and overlooking the garden is a long, handsome parlor, with two windows. The first and second stories compose two complete apartments, and the servants' rooms are recognizable by the skylights in the four-cornered roof. A magnificent porcelain stove adorns this great square hall, which receives its light from two opposite glass doors. The ceiling of this place, paved with black and white marble, has projecting joists once painted and gilded, but—in the time of the Empire no doubt—uniformly daubed white. Facing the stove is a red marble cistern with marble basin. The three doors, of the parlor, the salon, and the dining-room, show paintings in their upper panels which more than stand in need of renovation. The woodwork is clumsy, but the decoration is not unworthy of praise. The salon, wainscoted throughout, recalls the Great Century by its Languedoc marble chimney-piece, its ceiling with corner ornaments, and the shape of the windows, which have retained their minute panes. The dining-room, communicating with the salon by folding-doors, is flagged with stone; the panelling is all in oak, unpainted, and hideous modern wall-paper takes the place of the old-fashioned

hangings. The ceiling is of coffered chestnut, and has been left intact. The parlor, modernized by Thuillier, is all out of harmony. The gold and white of the salon are so faded that only red lines appear instead of the gold, and the yellowed white is scaling off. Never could the Latin words *Otium cum dignitate* receive a more real comment than this noble habitation once afforded. The ironwork on the banister is of a workmanship at once worthy of the judge and the artist, and indeed, to discover them in this legacy of past greatness, the discerning eye of the artist is wanted.

The Thuilliers and their predecessors did their best to dishonor this treasure of an affluent upper middle class by the habits and devices of the lower middle class. Do you see those walnut chairs upholstered with horsehair; a mahogany table with an oilcloth cover; mahogany sideboards; a second-hand carpet under the table; lamps of watery metal; cheap wall-paper with a red border; execrable pictures in black and white, and calico curtains edged with red fringes in that dining-room where Petitot and his friends feasted? Do you understand the effect upon the salon of the portraits of Monsieur, Madame, and Mademoiselle Thuillier, by Pierre Grassou, the painter of the middle classes; the card-tables that have done duty for twenty years; brackets in Empire style; a tea-table supported by a huge lyre; furniture of shabby mahogany covered with printed velvet on a chocolate background; on the chimney-piece fluted candelabra beside a clock representing the Bellona of the Empire; damask curtains and curtains of flowered muslin held by curtain bands of stamped brass? And on the polished floor a second-hand carpet! The handsome oblong vestibule has velvet benches, and its sculptured walls are hidden by wardrobes of various dates and

brought from all the houses that the Thuilliers had up to then lived in. A plank conceals the cistern, and a smoky lamp of the year 1815 has its place there. And to complete the picture, fear—that unlovely divinity—has supplied the garden and the courtyard entrances each with a sheet-iron door, opened back against the wall by day and closed at night.

It is easy to understand the miserable desecration of this monument of seventeenth-century private life by the domestic life of the nineteenth century. In the early days of the Consulate perhaps a master builder who had bought this little house conceived the idea of utilizing the ground fronting upon the street. He therefore probably demolished the fine courtyard gate, flanked by the little lodges which made this charming home so complete. Thus had the enterprise of a Parisian proprietor branded the very face of this elegance, just as the newspaper and its presses, the factory and its storehouses, commerce and its counters, ousted the aristocracy and the old burghers as well as the lords of finance and the lights of the law, wherever these had manifested their importance. What a strange tale is that of Parisian title-deeds! On the land where once stood the abode of the Chevalier Bayard du Terrail, in the Rue des Batailles, a madhouse now flourishes, and the Third Estate built a road on the site of the Necker mansion. Old Paris is going, following in the wake of the kings who have gone. For one masterpiece of architecture saved by a Polish princess (the Princess Czartoryska, who lived in the Hotel Lambert), how many smaller palaces, like Petitot's house, fall into the hands of such as the Thuilliers!

Here are the reasons that led up to Mademoiselle Thuillier's proprietorship of this house.

At the fall of the Villèle ministry, Monsieur Louis Jérome Thuillier, who then counted twenty-six years' service in the department of finance, became assistant chief; but scarcely had he tasted the delights of being second in command—once his least ambition—when the events of July, 1830, compelled him to resign. He very astutely calculated that a pension would be handsomely and readily forthcoming from men glad of another place to dispose of, and he guessed right, for his superannuation allowance was fixed at seventeen hundred francs. When the long-sighted assistant chief spoke of retiring from the government service, his sister, much more a companion in life to him than his wife, trembled for his future.

"What will become of Thuillier?" was a question that with mutual concern Madame and Mademoiselle Thuillier, then lodging in a small third-story flat, Rue d'Argenteuil, asked each other.

"Getting his pension settled will give him something to do for a time," Mademoiselle Thuillier had replied, "but I am thinking of investing my savings in a manner that will cut out his work for him. Yes, it will be almost like an official post to manage a piece of property."

"Oh! my sister, you will save his life!" cried Madame Thuillier.

"But I have always kept that crisis in Jérome's life before me!" answered the old maid with a motherly air.

Mademoiselle Thuillier had too often heard her brother say: "So-and-So is dead! He did not survive his superannuation by two years!" She had too often heard Colleville, Thuillier's intimate friend, and a government clerk like himself, joke about this climateric episode of official life. He used to say: "We shall all of us have our turn,

to be sure!" which, in the ears of Mademoiselle Thuillier, sounded ominous enough. The step from active service to superannuation is indeed the critical time of the government clerk's existence. Those who are pensioned off, who are ignorant of any other profession, or unable to enter one, change very strangely: some die, many take to angling, an entertainment which in its vacuity closely resembles desk work; others again—sly dogs—buy industrial shares, lose their savings, and after the failure of the concern are glad enough to accept a place in it after its reorganization by abler hands. Then the clerk rubs his own, saying to himself: "Of course I foresaw what a future this business had!" But they nearly all struggle against their old habits. Mademoiselle Thuillier was looked upon as the guardian angel of the fraternal household; she was deficient neither in strength of mind nor determination, as her private history will show. This superiority over her surroundings enabled her to judge her brother fairly, deeply devoted to him though she was. After witnessing the crash of hopes founded on the success of her idol, her strongly maternal instinct prevented her from overrating the assistant chief's social capacities.

Thuillier and his sister were children of the head porter at the Department of Finance. Thanks to his shortness of vision, Jérome had escaped military conscription and any likelihood of it. The father's ambition was a clerkship for the son. At the beginning of the nineteenth century too many places had to be filled in the army not to allow of a number of vacancies in the government offices, and the shortage in subordinate clerks enabled fat father Thuillier to see his son walk the first steps in the official hierarchy. The porter died in 1814, leaving Jérome no legacy but the

prospect of becoming assistant chief. Fat old Thuillier and his wife—who died in 1810—had retired about 1806 with a pension as their whole fortune, having spent their earnings in giving Jérome a suitable education and in keeping him and his sister.

The effect of the Restoration on the civil service is common knowledge. From the forty-one official divisions abolished came a large residue of reputable clerks who asked for lower places than they had been holding. Besides these rights of priority there were to be considered the claims of exiled families ruined by the Revolution. Between these competitors, Jérome was lucky enough not to be turned out on some thin pretext. He lived in constant anxiety until the day of his fortuitous promotion to the assistant chiefship, when he felt sure of a respectable pension.

This hasty review may explain how slight were Monsieur Thuillier's accomplishments. He had acquired the Latin, mathematics, history, and geography that one learns at a boarding school, but he had not advanced beyond the second class, his father seizing an opportunity to procure his admission to the civil service by boasting of his son's "splendid handwriting." If, therefore, little Thuillier inscribed the first list of names in the new government ledger, he missed his course of rhetoric and philosophy. Once in the official rut, he cultivated letters very little, and the arts still less; he gained a mechanical proficiency in his work, and when, under the Empire, he rose to the sphere of the first-class clerks, without really assimilating their style or conversation, he took on a superficial varnish that masked the porter's son. His ignorance taught him to observe silence, which, in fact, served him very well. He accustomed himself, under the Imperial system, to the passive

obedience so pleasing to superiors, and it was to this quality he owed his subsequent promotion to the rank of assistant chief. His daily routine ripened into valuable experience; his quiet manners and his silence covered his lack of education. This nonentity of spirit proved useful when a nobody was wanted. Some apprehension was felt of offending two parties in the Chamber of Deputies, each indorsing a candidate, and the authorities got out of the difficulty by adhering to the rule of seniority.

In this way did Thuillier become assistant chief. Mademoiselle Thuillier, knowing her brother's abhorrence of reading, and the impossibility of any branch of business giving him the equivalent of the worries of office work, she had wisely decided to thrust the cares of proprietorship upon him, the digging of a garden, the minutely trivial details of middle-class life, and the petty gossip of the neighborhood.

The transference of the Thuillier brigade from the Rue d'Argenteuil to the Rue Saint-Dominique-d'Enfer, the proper care to be exercised in the purchase, the engagement of a competent porter, the procuring of tenants—this took up Thuillier's time from 1831 to 1832. When the removal was accomplished, and the sister saw that Jérome had survived the operation, she found him other pursuits, which shall be mentioned further on, but the basis for which was Thuillier's own character—now fitly to be outlined.

Although a porter's son, Thuillier was what is called a fine-looking man. His figure was above the average height, and slender. With his glasses on, his face was quite agreeable, but, as in the case of many near-sighted persons, dreadful when he took them off; for the habit of

looking through spectacles had cast a sort of mist over his eyes.

From eighteen to thirty, Thuillier made conquests among the ladies in the social sphere that began at the small shopkeeper and reached up to the head of a division in the civil service. But it is true that the wars of the Empire depleted Parisian society in carrying off the men of sinew to battlefields, and to this fact is perhaps the softness of this mid-century generation due. Thuillier, obliged to rely upon fascinations other than intellectual, learned to dance so well as to be noted; he was called the "handsome Thuillier"; he played billiards to perfection; he knew how to cut out figures in paper; his friend Colleville taught him the art of warbling so well that he could sing fashionable ballads. From these little accomplishments resulted that semblance of success which deceives young people and lends them false hopes. Mademoiselle Thuillier, from 1806 to 1814, believed in her brother as much as Mademoiselle d'Orléans did in Louis-Philippe; she was proud of Jérome, and in her mind's eye saw him at the head of an office, thanks to his small triumphs in a circle which would have been closed to him at any other time than the days of the Empire, when society was strangely mixed.

However, handsome Thuillier's triumphs never were of long duration, for the women were no more anxious to keep his affections than he was to remain faithful; he might have supplied a comedy with the title "Don Juan in Spite of Himself." This regular business of doing the beautiful wore Thuillier out to the point of aging him: his face, as wrinkled as an old coquette's, credited him with ten years more than his birth certificate. But he had retained a habit of admiring himself in the glass, of putting his hands to his

waist to show it off, of posing in the attitudes of a dancer—all of which prolonged his lease of the nickname "handsome Thuillier."

The truth of 1806 became absurdity in 1826. Thuillier still preserved some vestiges of the dress of the Empire dandy, which, by the way, did not ill become his pensioned dignity. He continued to wear the white neckcloth, with the countless folds burying the chin, and whose ends threatened the safety of the passer-by right and left. Following the fashions at some distance of time, he adapted them to his own person. He wore his hat far back, and in summer low shoes and fine stockings. His long overcoat was an echo of the "levite" of the Empire; he had not yet relinquished frilled shirt fronts and white waistcoats; he still toyed with his 1810 cane and threw out his chest. No one who saw Thuillier walking on the boulevards would have taken him for the son of a man who served luncheon for the clerks at the Finance Department in the livery of Louis XVI. No—he looked like a diplomat of the Empire, or a sub-prefect. Now, not only did Mademoiselle Thuillier quite innocently exploit her brother's vanity by encouraging him in an excessive care of his person, but she also bestowed on him all the joys of family life by bringing near him a household whose existence had almost run parallel with his own.

It is Colleville who is in question, Thuillier's intimate friend. But before painting Pylades, it is the more necessary to first dispose of Orestes, as explanation must be rendered why Thuillier, handsome Thuillier, had no family—since a family only exists by children. And so we will speak of Madame and Mademoiselle Thuillier.

Marie-Jeanne-Brigitte Thuillier, four years older than

her brother, was completely sacrificed to him; it was easier to start one in a career than to provide a dowry for another. To some people adversity is a torch that lights up the dark, sordid places of life. Her brother's superior in birth, energy and brains, Brigitte was one of those natures who under the hard hammer of fate grow tough, compact, and resistant, not to say inflexible. Jealous of her liberty, she wanted to emancipate herself from the porter's lodge, and become the sole arbitress of her destiny.

At the age of fourteen she retired to a garret, not far from the treasury, then in the Rue Vivienne, and near the Rue Vrillière, where the Bank of France still stands to-day. She courageously took up an industry not widely pursued, and which, thanks to the patronage her father enjoyed, was a privileged one. It consisted in sewing bags for the Bank, the Treasury, and the great financial establishments. In the third year she was employing two workwomen. By investing her savings in government bonds, in 1814 she boasted an income of three thousand six hundred francs, the result of fifteen years' toil. She had few expenses, and dined nearly every day with her father during his lifetime. It is a well-known fact, too, that during the last convulsions of the Empire the aforesaid bonds were down at forty odd francs, so that her apparently large accumulations were not improbably extensive.

Upon the death of the porter, Brigitte and Jérome, aged twenty-seven and twenty-three, cast in their lot together. Brother and sister had a deep affection for one another. Whenever Jérome, then in the season of his triumphs, was pressed for money, his sister, clad in homespun, and her fingers skinned by sewing-thread, always had a few gold pieces to offer her brother. In the eyes of Brigitte, Jérome

was the handsomest and most fascinating man in the French empire. To keep house for her beloved brother, to be initiated into the secrets of Lindoro and Don Juan, to be his slave and his poodle dog, to fetch and carry—this was the dream of Brigitte. She sacrificed herself almost passionately to an idol whose self-love she fostered while sanctifying it. For fifteen thousand francs she made over her business to her forewoman, and settled in the Rue d'Argenteuil with Thuillier, as the mother, protectress, and servant of this "darling of the ladies." Brigitte, with prudence natural in one owing everything to her discretion and the labor of her hands, kept her brother in ignorance of the amount of her fortune; she no doubt feared the extravagance of a man of many conquests, and contributed only six hundred francs a year to their expenses, which, together with Jérome's eighteen hundred, enabled them to make ends meet.

From the first day of their partnership, Thuillier listened to his sister as to an oracle, consulted her about the most trifling matters, hid none of his secrets from her, and thus tempted her with the fruit of dominion, which was to become her pet sin. The sister had sacrificed everything to the brother; she had given everything for a place in his heart; she lived by and for him. Brigitte's ascendency over Jérome was singularly emphasized by the marriage she arranged for him about 1814.

Observing the startling changes made in the government offices by the new-comers of the Restoration, and perceiving how the returning nobility was displacing the middle class, Brigitte and her brother thoroughly understood the crisis in which their social aspirations were being wrecked. No more glory for handsome Thuillier with the aristocrats succeeding to the plebeians of the Empire!

Thuillier, too weak-minded to adopt political opinions, felt, as his sister did, the necessity of making the best of his remnants of youthful attractions. Brigitte, jealous woman though she was, wanted her brother to marry, because although she alone could give him happiness, a Madame Thuillier was the unavoidable accessory to a child or two. If Brigitte was not blessed with all the wit requisite to carry out her desires, she at least had the instinct of power, for she was quite without education, and went straight on with the obstinacy of one accustomed to win. She possessed the gift of housekeeping, the genius of economy, and a love of work. She saw that she would never find a wife for Jérome in a higher social set, where inquiries would be made as to their mode of life, and where the presence of herself as mistress of the house might give rise to apprehension. She therefore looked for people in a lower scale of society who might be dazzled, and among them met with a desirable match for her brother.

The oldest messenger of the Bank of France, Lemprun by name, had an only daughter, Céleste. Mademoiselle Céleste Lemprun would be heiress to the fortune of her mother, the only daughter of an agriculturist. This fortune consisted of some acres of land in the vicinity of Paris, still operated by the old man, besides the wealth of old man Lemprun. Lemprun, then head messenger, enjoyed the respect and favor of the management and the auditors. And the board of directors, hearing of Céleste's marriage to a clerk of good standing in the Finance Department, promised a bonus of six thousand francs. This bonus, added to twelve thousand francs from Father Lemprun, and twelve thousand more given by Sire Galard, a market-gardener of Auteuil, brought her marriage portion up to thirty thousand

francs. Old Galard and the Lempruns were delighted with this match; the head messenger knew Mademoiselle Thuillier as one of the worthiest and most upright women in Paris. Brigitte, moreover, made her securities shine in the eyes of Lemprun by confiding to him that she would never marry, and neither he nor his wife would ever have taken the liberty to criticise Brigitte. They were much impressed by the splendor of handsome Thuillier's position, and so the wedding, to use a conventional phrase, went off to the entire satisfaction of everybody.

The governor and the secretary of the bank acted as witnesses for the bride, as Thuillier's chief of division and his head clerk did for him. Six days after the ceremony, old Lemprun was the victim of an audacious robbery, spoken of in the newspapers of the day, but speedily forgotten during the stirring events of 1815. The perpetrators had escaped all pursuit; Lemprun wanted to make good the amount, and although the Bank charged this deficit to the profit and loss account, the poor old fellow died of grief. He looked upon this disaster as a blow at his life-long honesty.

Madame Lemprun gave up her whole inheritance to her daughter, Madame Thuillier, and went to live at Auteuil with her father, who died of an accident in 1817. Frightened at the prospects of having to manage or lease her father's gardens and fields, Madame Lemprun begged Brigitte, whose capacity and integrity astonished her, to liquidate Galard's property, and to arrange matters so that her daughter, coming into the whole of it, would assure her an allowance of fifteen hundred francs, and leave her in possession of the house at Auteuil. The agriculturist's land, sold in lots, yielded thirty thousand francs. Lemprun's

legacy was of the like amount, and these two sums, together with the dowry, made a total of ninety thousand francs.

The dowry was invested in bank shares at a time when they were worth nine hundred francs. Brigitte secured an annuity of five thousand francs from the sixty thousand—five per cents being at sixty—and caused the widow Lemprun to be credited with a yearly allowance of fifteen hundred francs. Thus, at the beginning of the year 1818, the sum of six hundred francs paid by Brigitte, the three thousand four hundred belonging to Thuillier, Céleste's income of thirty-five hundred, and the interest on thirty-four Bank of France shares, produced, all told, a revenue of twelve thousand francs, which was under the sole control of Brigitte. It is necessary to enter into these financial details, not only to forestall possible objections, but to clear the stage for the play.

To begin with, Brigitte gave her brother five hundred francs a month, and guided the helm so that five thousand francs covered all housekeeping expenses. She allowed her sister-in-law fifty francs a month, demonstrating that forty was enough for herself. In order to establish her rule by the power of money, Brigitte amassed what remained of her private income; she transacted, they said in the offices, usurious loans, her brother acting as intermediary in the guise of a bill discounter. If it is stated that from 1813 to 1830 Brigitte capitalized sixty thousand francs, the accumulation of such a sum can be accounted for by the varying rates of interest, all the way up to forty per cent, which all these operations involved.

From the very beginning, Brigitte broke in poor Madame Thuillier with spur and bit. The luxury of tyranny

was superfluous, as the victim resigned herself promptly. Céleste was correctly judged by Brigitte. She was devoid of intellect and education, used to a sedentary, tranquil life, and of an exceedingly gentle disposition. Pious she was in the full sense of the word; she would have undergone voluntary penitential exercises for doing unintentional harm to her neighbor. She knew nothing whatever of life; she was accustomed to being waited on by her mother, who performed all the house work, and obliged to keep very quiet because of her lymphatic constitution, susceptible to the least exertion. A Parisian daughter of the people she was, of that class in which the children are rarely beautiful, born as they are in an atmosphere of poverty and overwork, living in stuffy rooms, under all sorts of restraint and without the ordinary comforts.

At the time of the marriage Céleste was a pale blonde, stout, leisurely, and with a very silly face. Her forehead was too broad and projected too far, and under this wax-colored dome, her face, which was obviously too small, and ended in a point like the nose of a mouse, inspired some of the guests with the fear that sooner or later she would be a madwoman. Her light blue eyes and the eternal smile flitting on her lips only strengthened this idea. On the day of her wedding she exhibited the demeanor and the conduct of a prisoner condemned to death who is wishing for a speedy end.

"She is as round as a ball," said Colleville to Thuillier.

Brigitte was the knife which was to enter into this soul, and with which hers stood in most forcible contrast. Her own was a regular and severe beauty, roughened by tasks which from her youth had bowed her down under coarse, ungrateful work, and by secret privations she imposed upon

herself in order to accumulate a larger hoard of savings. Her complexion, discolored early in life, had a steely tint; her brown eyes were bordered with black, or rather bruised circles; her upper lip wore a brownish down, as though it had been smoked; she had thin lips, and her imperious forehead was thrown into relief by a head of hair once black, but which now was turning gray. She held herself as straight as any beauty, and everything in her appearance displayed the rough nature of her work, and her great energy and the price which she had paid for her efforts.

Brigitte looked upon Céleste as nothing but a victim, another subject under her mastery. She soon reproached her with being limp, a favorite word in her vocabulary, and this jealous old maid, who would have been seriously put out at finding her sister-in-law active, felt a savage pleasure in stimulating the inertness of the feeble creature. Céleste was ashamed at seeing her sister-in-law display such tidiness as a chambermaid's, and performing the smallest household duties. When she fell sick, Brigitte immediately was all attention on behalf of Madame Thuillier; she nursed her as if she had been her own sister, and said to her before Thuillier: "You are not strong enough—well, then, take it easy, little one!" She made a great deal of Céleste's incapacity, with that display of consolation by which strength, assuming an air of pity for weakness, finds the means of wording its own praise.

Then, like all despotic natures which like to show their strength and are all tenderness for physical suffering, she cared for her sister-in-law in a manner to satisfy Céleste's mother whenever she came to see her daughter. When Madame Thuillier was fully restored, she spoke of her, in such a way as to be overheard, as a "dolt" and a "good-for-

nothing." Céleste went to weep in her room, and Thuillier, surprising her there in the act of wiping her eyes, made excuses for his sister—"She is very good, but she is quick-tempered; she loves in her own way. She treats me just the same."

Céleste, remembering the motherly treatment she had received, forgave her sister-in-law. Brigitte, moreover, treated her brother as though he were the king of the place. She held up his virtues to Céleste, made an autocrat of him, and an infallible pope. Madame Thuillier, bereft of her father and her grandfather, and almost deserted by her mother, who only came to see her on Thursdays, and whom she visited on Sundays in fine weather, had no one to love but her husband: first of all because he was her husband, and then because to her he remained handsome Thuillier. He, on his part, sometimes really treated her like a wife, and these reasons combined sufficed to make him an adorable being in her sight. He seemed the more perfect to her as he often took the side of Céleste and scolded his sister, not indeed in his wife's interest, but through selfishness, and in order to secure peace in the house for the short moments which he spent there.

As a fact, handsome Thuillier came into dinner, and after going out returned to bed very late. He went to balls and to see his friends all alone, just as though he were still a bachelor, so that these two women were continually thrown into each other's company.

By degrees Céleste assumed a passive attitude, and became just what Brigitte wanted—a slave. The Queen Elizabeth of this household passed from her domineering position to a sort of pity for a victim who was always being sacrificed. She finally moderated her haughty air, her cut-

ting words, and her contemptuous tone, as soon as she was certain of having broken her sister into the yoke. Once she perceived the scars made by the collar on the neck of her slave, she bestowed as much care upon her as though she were her own property, and Céleste knew better days. Comparing the beginning with the sequel, she conceived a sort of affection for her jailer. There was but one chance of providing herself with the means of defence, and enabling her to take a stand in a family enriched by her fortune, without herself obtaining anything but the crumbs from the table. But this chance never came to her. For after six years, Céleste was childless. Her sterility, which month by month made her shed torrents of tears, for a long time provoked Brigitte's contempt, and she reproved her with being of no use at all, not even good enough to make children. This old maid, who had promised herself to love her brother's child as her own, was slow in getting used to the idea of this irremediable misfortune.

At the opening of this story, in 1840, at the age of forty-six, Céleste had ceased weeping, for she had acquired the sorrowful certainty of never becoming a mother. Very strangely, after twenty-five years of this existence, in which victory had finally blunted and then broken the knife, Brigitte loved Céleste as much as Céleste loved her. In the course of time and of a life of ease, the friction of domestic life had rubbed off the corners and smoothed the asperities, and the resigned disposition of Céleste and her soft nature prepared a serene autumn. The two women were drawn together by their common admiration for Thuillier—that happy egoist—which was the one great sentiment of their lives. So that in another way these two women, both childless, had, as all women who vainly wish

for children, selected a child as the object of their love This sham maternity, as strong, however, as a real one, requires an explanation. And this takes us to the heart of this drama, and will account for the occupation that Mademoiselle Thuillier had found it necessary to give her brother.

Thuillier had entered as supernumerary clerk with Colleville, who has been mentioned as his friend. In contrast to Thuillier's dull and regular household was offered that of Colleville, and if it must be admitted that this fortuitous contrast is not very moral, we must add that it is indispensable to this part of the tale, unhappily too true, but for which the historian is in no wise responsible. This Colleville was the only son of a talented musician, once first violin at the Opera. Colleville and Thuillier were inseparable friends, without secrets from one another, and their friendship, begun at the age of fifteen, had remained unclouded till 1839.

Colleville was one of the clerks called "pluralists" in the civil service. These clerks are always conspicuous for their energy. Colleville, a good musician, owed to his father's name and influence the place of first clarinet at the Opéra Comique, and while he was a bachelor, being a little better off than Thuillier, often shared with his friend. But differently from Thuillier, Colleville made a marriage of love when he espoused Mademoiselle Flavie, the natural child of a celebrated dancer at the Opera, and the supposed daughter of a very rich upholsterer. Flavie was destined by her birth and her proclivities to the same sad life as her mother, when Colleville, who had frequent occasions to see the dancer, fell in love with Flavie, and married her. Prince Galathionne, who in September, 1815, was "protecting"

the celebrated dancer, then nearing the end of her brilliant career, bestowed a dowry of twenty thousand francs upon Flavie, to which her mother added a gorgeous trousseau. The habitual visitors of her house and her colleagues at the Opera contributed presents of jewels and silverware, so that the Colleville household was better off for superfluities than for cash. Flavie, brought up in luxury, to begin with, had a charming apartment, furnished by her mother's decorator, where this young woman held court, indulging her tastes for the arts and artists with a certain degree of elegance. Madame Colleville was at once pretty and attractive; she was witty, lively, graceful, and, in a word, a good soul. The dancer, aged forty-three, retired from the stage, and went to live in the country, thus depriving her daughter of her former resources. Madame Colleville kept a rather pleasant, but decidedly extravagant house. From 1816 to 1826 she had five children. A musician at night, from seven until nine in the morning Colleville kept a merchant's books. By ten he was at his office. By thus blowing on a piece of wood in the evening, and by performing double bookkeeping in the morning, he made between seven and eight thousand francs in a year.

Madame Colleville played at lady. She received on Wednesdays, and gave a concert once a month and a dinner every fortnight. She only saw Colleville at dinner, and when he came home at midnight, when sometimes she had not returned herself. She used to go to the theatres, as frequently a box was given her, and she would send word to Colleville to call for her at the house where she happened to be dining or supping. The fare at Madame Colleville's was excellent, and the society, though mixed, was undoubtedly amusing; she received noted actresses, painters, men

of letters, and a few men of wealth. Madame Colleville's style kept pace with Tullia's, now first dancer at the Opera, of whom she saw a great deal. But although the Collevilles ate up their capital, and were often in straits at the end of the month, nevertheless Flavie kept out of debt. Colleville was very happy; he continued to love his wife and was always her best friend. Regularly received with an affectionate smile and good spirits, he yielded to her graceful ways and irresistible fascinations. The tremendous energy he vented in his three occupations suited his character and his temperament very well. He was a large, stout man with a highly colored complexion, very jovial, spendthrift and full of whims. There was not a single quarrel in his house in ten years. In the office he passed for a hare-brained fellow, like all artists, they said. But superficial observers mistook the continual haste of the diligent worker for mere carelessness.

Colleville was clever enough to assume stupidity. He boasted of his family happiness, and pretended to be concocting anagrams, for the sake of posing as a man absorbed by this passion. The clerks in his division at the department, the head of his office, and even the chief of the division, came to his concerts. From time to time he very opportunely distributed theatre tickets, being in continual quest of leniency because of his frequent absences. The rehearsals took half of the time he ought to have spent at the office. But the talent and knowledge of music which he had inherited from his father was so considerable as to enable him to pass by attending only the general rehearsals. Thanks to the influence of Madame Colleville, the theatre and the office both yielded to the exigencies of this worthy pluralist's situation, who, besides, was giving private les-

sons to a young man in high favor with his wife, a great future musician, and who often took his place in the orchestra with good prospects of succeeding him there.

Eventually, in fact, the young man obtained the post of first clarinet when Colleville resigned the place. All criticism of Flavie reduced itself to this: "She is a coquettish little piece, is little Madame Colleville." The oldest child, born in 1816, was the living image of our good friend Colleville. In 1818 Madame Colleville gave the preference to the cavalry above everything else, even above the arts; having cast her eye on a sub-lieutenant of dragoons, the young and wealthy Charles Gondreville, who was afterward killed in the Spanish war. She had already had her second son, whom she destined for the military career. In 1820 she considered the Bank as the nurse of industry and the support of the State, and the great Keller, the famous orator, was her idol. She then had a son François, of whom she resolved to make a merchant later on, seeing that Keller's patronage would not be wanting. About the end of 1820, Thuillier, Madame and Monsieur Colleville's intimate friend and Flavie's admirer, felt the need of pouring his troubles into the bosom of this excellent woman, and confided his domestic woes to her. For six years he had been striving for children, and the Almighty had not blessed his endeavors, for poor Madame Thuillier prayed and went to Mass in vain. He gave a most faithful description of Céleste, and the words "poor Thuillier" came from the lips of Madame Colleville, who on her side happened to be in poor spirits. Just then she had no special predilection. So she made Thuillier's heart the repository of her troubles. The great Keller, that heroic figure in politics, was really mean and petty. She had seen the wrong side

of fame, the follies of finance, and the superficiality of the tribune of the people. The orator had kept his beautiful eloquence for the Chamber, and had behaved very badly toward her. Thuillier was indignant. "Only blockheads know how to love," said he; "take me." The handsome Thuillier was reputed to be paying court mildly to Madame Colleville, and, as the current saying went in the days of the Empire, was one of her "attendants."

"Oh, you have designs upon my wife," laughed Colleville; "take care, she will leave you in the lurch as she did all the others." By this rather clever speech Colleville saved his marital dignity at the office. From 1820 to 1821 Thuillier took it upon himself to assist Colleville, who had so often helped him, and within eighteen months he loaned the Colleville household ten thousand francs, intending never to mention it. In the spring of 1820 Madame Colleville gave birth to a lovely little girl, who had Monsieur and Madame Thuillier for her godfather and godmother. So she was baptized Céleste-Louise-Caroline-Brigitte. Mademoiselle Thuillier insisted on giving this little angel one of her Christian names. As a compliment to Colleville, the name of Caroline was selected. Old mother Lemprun undertook to have the child put out to nurse at Auteuil, where she lived, and where Céleste and her sister-in-law went to see her twice a week. As soon as Madame Colleville was on her feet again, she said in a frank and a friendly manner to Thuillier:

"My dear friend, if we are to remain friends, we must be nothing more than friends. Colleville likes you—and—well—one is enough in the family."

"Tell me," said handsome Thuillier to Tullia the dancer, who happened to be at Madame Colleville's then, "why do

women not attach themselves to me more? I am not an Apollo, neither am I a Vulcan; but I am a passable fellow, I have brains, I am constant."

"You want to know the truth?" answered Tullia.

"Yes," answered handsome Thuillier.

"Well, if we sometimes love a fool, we never love an idiot." This was too much for Thuillier, and he did not recover from it. From that day forth he gave way to melancholy, and accused all women of ficklenesss.

"I warned you, did I not?" said Colleville. "I am not Napoleon, I know, and would rather not have been Napoleon, but I have a Josephine—a pearl!"

The Secretary-General of the Finance Department, to whom Madame attributed more influence than he really had, and of whom she afterward said, "He is one of my mistakes," was just then the great man of the Colleville circle. But as he had not sufficient power to have Colleville nominated for the Bois-Levant division, Flavie had the good sense to resent the attentions he showed Madame Rabourdin, the head clerk's wife. A minx, she said, who had never invited her to her house, and who had twice been impertinent enough not to come to her concerts.

Madame Colleville was deeply affected by the death of young Gondreville. She was inconsolable. She felt, she said, the hand of God. In 1824 she mended her ways, talked economy, stopped her receptions, busied herself with her children, tried to be a good mother of her family, and her friends ceased talking about her favorites. But she went to church, began a reform in her dress, wore sober gray, talked of Catholicism and proprieties, and the result of this mysticism was a pretty little boy, whom she called Théodore, signifying given by God.

The following year Colleville was created assistant chief of the division, and in 1828 became collector of a district of Paris. Colleville was granted the Cross of the Legion of Honor, which would entitle him to have his daughter brought up some day at Saint-Denis. The half-scholarship which Keller managed to obtain for Charles, the oldest of the Colleville children, was handed down to the second; Charles secured a whole scholarship at the school of Saint-Louis, and the third, under the benevolent ægis of Madame the Dauphiness, had a three-quarter's scholarship at the school of Henri IV. conferred upon him.

In 1830, Colleville, who was happy enough not to have lost any of his children, was obliged to resign, owing to his devotion to the Legitimist monarchical cause. He was clever enough, however, to draw some profit from it in the shape of a pension of two thousand four hundred francs, due to him for time served, and an indemnity of ten thousand francs from his successor, and he was made an officer of the Legion of Honor besides. He, nevertheless, found himself in narrow circumstances, and in 1832 Madame Thuillier advised him to settle down near them, foreshadowing the prospect of securing a place for him in the mayor's office, to which he was in fact appointed in a fortnight, and drew a salary of a thousand crowns. Charles Colleville had just entered the Naval School. The schools to which the other two little Collevilles went were close by. The Seminary of Saint-Sulpice, where the third was eventually to go, was only a few doors from the Luxembourg. So Thuillier and Colleville had made up their minds to end their days together. In 1833, Madame Colleville, then thirty-five, came to live in the Rue d'Enfer with Céleste and little

Théodore. Colleville resided at an equal distance from the mayor's office and the Rue Saint-Dominique. This family, after a life which had seen all the phases between brilliant gayety and unostentatious comfort, now found itself reduced to middle-class obscurity and a total fortune of four thousand five hundred francs.

Céleste was then twelve years old. She promised to be beautiful. She required masters. She would cost at least two thousand francs a year. Her mother felt under the obligation of placing her under the eye of her godfather and godmother. And she also adopted Mademoiselle Thuillier's opinion, who, without absolutely binding herself, let Madame Colleville understand plainly that her brother's fortune, her sister-in-law's, and her own, were intended for Céleste. And this little girl had remained at Auteuil up to the age of seven, worshipped by good old Madame Lemprun, who died in 1829, leaving twenty thousand francs in savings, and a house which was sold for the large sum of twenty-eight thousand francs. The child had seen very little of her mother, and a great deal of Madame and Mademoiselle Thuillier, since 1829, the year of her entrance to the paternal house. In 1823 she had fallen under the influence of Flavie, who was then trying to attend to her duties faithfully, and who overdid them, like all women plagued with remorse. Flavie, without being a bad mother, brought her daughter up very strictly. She remembered her own childhood, and made a secret vow to make an honest woman of Céleste, and not a light one. She, therefore, took her to Mass and saw to it that she went to her first communion under the auspices of a worthy Parisian priest, who afterward became a bishop. Céleste was all the more religious as Madame Thuillier, her god-

mother, was the same. The child adored her godmother, for she felt that the poor thing loved her better than her own mother.

From 1833 to 1840 she was given a most splendid education, according to middle-class ideas. The best music masters made a passable musician of her; she could paint fairly well in water colors; she danced to perfection; she had learned French, history, geography, Italian—all in fact that is requisite for the education of a young lady. Of average height, inclined to slightness and afflicted with short-sightedness, she was neither plain nor pretty; she had a clear skin and bright complexion, but was totally innocent of distinction of manner. She had a good deal of sensibility in reserve, and her godfather and godmother, as well as Mademoiselle Thuillier and her father, were unanimous on one point—the great resource of mothers—that Céleste was capable of strong attachments. One of her chief beauties was a head of magnificent brown hair, but her hands and feet betrayed her plebeian origin.

Céleste was conspicuous for cardinal virtues; she was kind, simple and sweet; she loved her father and mother, and would have given her life for them. Brought up in deep admiration for her godfather, Céleste entertained the loftiest ideas of the ex-assistant chief. These notions had been inculcated both by Brigitte, whom she was in the habit of calling "Aunt Brigitte," by Madame Thuillier, and by her mother. The house in the Rue Saint-Dominique was to her what the Palace of the Tuileries was to a courtier of the new dynasty.

Thuillier had not resisted the action of the civil service treadmill, with its monotonous and wearing toil; and thus broken down, and jaded with his successes as a lady's man,

the abilities of the ex-assistant chief were much attenuated when he came to live in the Rue Saint-Dominique, although his tired expression was mingled with an appearance of satisfaction which greatly resembled the fatuity of a superior clerk, and, somehow, it made a profound impression upon Céleste. She alone adored this colorless visage. And she was conscious of being the joy of the Thuillier household.

The Collevilles and their children became the natural nucleus of the society with which Mademoiselle Thuillier ambitiously surrounded her brother. An old clerk of the Billardière division, who for more than thirty years had lived in the Saint-Jacques quarter, Monsieur Phellion, a major in the National Guard, was at once recognized by the former collector and ex-assistant chief at the first review he witnessed. Phellion was one of the best considered persons of the district. He had a daughter, once an assistant schoolmistress, now married to Monsieur Barniol, a schoolmaster.

Phellion's son was professor of mathematics at one of the royal colleges; he gave lessons and lectures and made pure mathematics—to use an expression of his father's—the object of his life. The second son was at an engineering school. Phellion had a pension of nine hundred francs, and enjoyed an income of nine thousand odd francs, the results of his savings and his wife's in thirty years of hard work and privations. In addition, he was the proprietor of a little house with a garden which he occupied in the *cul-de-sac* of the Feuillantines.

Dutocq, clerk of the court, was a former clerk in the Department of Finance. Sacrificed to one of those exigencies to be met with under representative government, he had been willing to act as a scapegoat in the case of an administrative scandal, and for this had been surreptitiously

rewarded with a comfortable sum; he had thus been able to pay for his appointment as clerk of the court. This man, who knew very little about honor, and was a sort of official spy, was not received by the Thuilliers as he believed was his due; nevertheless, the coldness of this landlord did not make him desist from his visits.

This man, who had remained a bachelor, had his vices. He concealed his mode of life carefully, and by strategy knew how to keep in good standing with his superiors. The magistrate had a very good opinion of Dutocq. This shameful person contrived to win the toleration of the Thuilliers by that base and vulgar adulation which never misses its effect. He knew Thuillier's life, his relations with Colleville and especially with Madame Colleville; his terrible tongue was fierce, and the Thuilliers, without admitting him to their intimacy, nevertheless felt obliged to countenance him. The family that became the flower of the Thuillier circle was that of the poor humble clerk, once an object of pity in the office, and who, pushed by poverty, had left the civil service in 1827, to engage in commerce.

This Minard foresaw that a fortune was to be made in one of those rascally schemes which discredited French commerce, but which in 1827 had not yet been branded by public opinion. He bought tea and mixed it with tea leaves already used. Then, he adulterated chocolate in such a way as to be able to sell it very cheap. This business in colonial produce, begun in the Saint Marcel Quarter, made a considerable shopkeeper of Minard. He had a storeroom, and by extending his connections was able to buy his staples directly from the producer in the raw. He did the business honorably and on a large scale which

he had begun so unscrupulously. He became a distiller, engaged in large transactions, and in a few years passed for the richest trader in the Quartier Maubert. He had bought one of the finest houses in the Rue Maçon-Sorbonne. He had been deputy-mayor, and, in 1839, was made mayor of his district and judge in the commercial court. He had a carriage and an estate near Lanier; his wife wore diamonds at court balls, and he flaunted the rosette of an officer of the Legion of Honor.

Minard and his wife were exceedingly charitable. Perhaps they were trying to pay back retail to the poor what they had stolen wholesale from the public. Phellion, Colleville and Thuillier met Minard at the elections, and an intimate friendship ensued with the Thuilliers and the Collevilles, Madame Zélie Minard seeming to be delighted to get the acquaintance of Céleste Colleville for her "young lady." It was at a grand ball given by the Minards that Céleste made her entrance into society, being then sixteen and a half years old, dressed as profusely as her origin suggested. Happy with this connection with Mademoiselle Minard, her senior by four years, she persuaded her godfather and her father to cultivate the Minard family, where, with all its splendors and luxuries, there were frequent gatherings of political celebrities. Minard's eldest son, a barrister on the lookout for places of men who had got into bad odor through politics, was the genius of the house, and his mother as well as his father aspired to a fine match for him. Zélie Minard, formerly a flower-maker, felt an ardent passion for the high spheres of society, where she hoped to penetrate by the marriages of her daughter and her son, while Minard, wiser than herself, and imbued with the ideas of the middle class which the Revolution of July

had introduced to power, was thinking only of money as the thing to be desired.

He haunted the Thuilliers' house for the sake of gaining hints on the subject of Céleste's possible inheritance. He knew, like Dutocq and Phellion, of the rumors once current about Thuillier's affair with Flavie, and he had at once noticed the Thuilliers' worship of their goddaughter. So Dutocq, in order to get admission to Minard's house, flattered him most prodigiously. When Minard, the Rothschild of the district, appeared at the Thuilliers', he rather cleverly compared him to Napoleon, when he found him stout and florid, after knowing him as a thin, pale, and puny clerk in the office: "In the Billardière division you were like Napoleon before the 18th Brumaire, but now I see the Napoleon of the Empire!" Minard received Dutocq coldly, however, and did not invite him; in consequence he made a mortal enemy of the malignant clerk of the court.

Monsieur and Madame Phellion, worthy people though they were, could not restrain themselves from making calculations and building up hopes. They thought that Céleste would be good game for their son the professor, and so, in order to obtain a footing in the Thuillier house, they took their son-in-law there, Monsieur Barniol, a man of importance in the suburb of Saint-Jacques. The Phellions composed a phalanx of seven persons, all true to each other, and the Colleville family was no less numerous. So that often on Sundays there were thirty people in the Thuilliers' drawing-room. Thuillier, furthermore, made the acquaintance of the Saillards, the Baudoyers and the Falleix, people of substance in the Palais Royal Quarter, and whom they frequently invited to dinner. Madame Colleville was as a woman the most distinguished person of this circle, as

Minard the son and Professor Phellion were its foremost men; for all the others, who were without ideas and without education, and who had sprung from an inferior rank, exhibited the characteristics and the absurdities of the lower middle class. Although all wealth acquired by devious ways presupposes some talent, Minard was nothing more than a balloon blown out. Spreading himself out in elaborate phrases, mistaking obsequiousness for politeness, and empty formulæ for wit, he dispensed commonplaces with an assurance and a sonority of voice which gave them all the weight of real eloquence. Such words—which mean nothing and answer everything—as progress, steam, asphalt, the national guard, order, the elements of democracy, the spirit of co-operation, legality, movement, resistance, intimidation—such words seemed almost invented for the benefit of Minard, who merely paraphrased the ideas he found in his newspaper. Julien Minard, the young barrister, could as little endure his father as his father endured his wife. Indeed, with rising prosperity Zélie had assumed great airs, though without ever being able to learn French; she had grown stout, and in her flashy finery looked like a cook married to her master.

Phellion, that perfect type of the lower middle class, showed as many virtues as he did absurdities. As a subordinate during his official life he had learned to respect his social superior. Therefore, he observed silence in the presence of Minard. He had acquitted himself remarkably well, when the usual time for superannuation came. Never had this worthy and excellent man been able to follow his tastes. He loved the city of Paris, and was interested in all public improvements and embellishments. He was the man to stop for two hours before a house being pulled

down. You might have seen him in an imposing attitude, nose in air, looking on at the fall of every stone loosened by the mason's crowbar, and without stirring from the spot until the stone had fallen, and when it had, he went away as happy as a member of the Academy would have been over the fall of a romantic drama. Like true supernumeraries in the grand social comedy, Phellion and the like of him fulfilled the function of the chorus in the classic age. When it is proper to weep they weep; they laugh when one ought to laugh, and sing the song of public misfortunes and triumphs to order, bewailing either the death of Napoleon or a local catastrophe in exactly the same tone, moaning the loss of the public men they know least off. But Phellion showed two faces. He was conscientiously divided between the opinions of the government and of the opposition. When there was fighting and killing in the streets, Phellion had the courage to speak out before his neighbors; he went to the Place Saint-Michel, where his battalion assembled; he commiserated the government and did his duty. Before and during the revolt he upheld the dynasty, but when the political trials began he turned to the side of the prisoners. This innocent sort of weathercock proceeding was reflected in his political views. His constant watchword was the "Giant of the North." England was to him a double-tongued old woman, and, on the other hand, Machiavelian Albion was the model country—Machiavelian when the interests of France and Napoleon were in question, the model country when mistakes of the government were under discussion. He acknowledged, with his newspaper, the preponderance of the democratic principle, and in conversation refused any compromise with the republican spirit. The republican spirit meant 1793, it meant rebellion,

it meant the reign of terror, and the agrarian laws. The democratic principle sprang from the lower middle class; it meant the reign of Phellion.

This excellent old man was always dignified; his dignity explained his life. He had brought up his children with dignity, he had always been the respectable father in their eyes, and had insisted on respect at home, as he himself respected authority and his superiors. He had never been in debt. As a juryman, his conscience made him sweat blood and water in following the debates on a trial, and he never laughed, not even when the court and the audience and all the authorities laughed. Eminently obliging, he was generous with solicitude, time, everything, in fact, but money. Félix Phellion, his son the professor, was his idol; he believed him capable of reaching a chair in the Academy of Science. Between the audacious nonentity of Minard and the frank imbecility of Phellion, Thuillier was like a neutral substance, but he partook of the qualities of both, owing to his melancholy experience. He glossed over his stupidity by vapid phrases, just as his yellow skull was concealed by the strings of gray hair most artistically brought from the back of his head to the front by the hairdresser's comb.

"In any other career," said he when speaking of the civil service, "I should have done very much better."

He had seen what could be done in theory and what in practice was impossible; he had seen results which had contradicted the premises. He discussed the unfairness and the intrigues of the higher officials, and of course the affair Rabourdin.

"After that one may believe anything and believe nothing," said he. "Yes, government is a singular thing, and

I am glad that I have no son, who might enter the race for a place."

Colleville, always lively, a fat and thoroughly good fellow, cracking jokes, making up his anagrams, always busy, represented the typical hard-working gossip of the middle class. And that meant capacity without success, honest toil unrequited; but it also meant smiling resignation, an insignificant mind and an art without purpose, for he was an excellent musician, and now only played for his daughter. So this drawing-room was a species of provincial social academy, but lighted up by the glare of Parisian life. The fashionable phrases and fancies of Paris arrived there on the rebound. Minard was always awaited there with impatience, for he was supposed to know the facts of the great world. The women in the Thuillier circle were for the Jesuits; the men defended the University; but as a rule the women listened. A man of intelligence, could he have endured the tedium of these evening parties, would have laughed as much as at a play by Molière on being informed of such facts as these: Could the Revolution of 1789 have been avoided? The extravagance of Louis XIV. paved the way for it. Louis XV. was an egoist with a mania for ceremonial. He said, "If I were chief of police I would prohibit cabriolets." He was a dissolute king. Strangers have always been hostile to France. Louis XVI. would have been acquitted by a jury. What caused the fall of Charles X? Napoleon is a great man, and there are anecdotes which prove that he is a genius. He was in the habit of taking five pinches of snuff per minute from pockets lined with leather in his waistcoat. He settled all his tradesmen's accounts. He had Talma for a friend; Talma taught him his gestures, and nevertheless he al-

ways refused to give Talma a medal. The Emperor took a sentinel's place who had gone to sleep to prevent him from being shot. The soldiers worshipped him for things like that. Louis XVIII., who was a clever man, was unfair to him when he called him Monsieur de Bonaparte. The chief fault of the present government is that it is following instead of leading. It has placed itself on a low plane. It wants men of action; it ought to have drawn up the treaties of 1815 and asked Europe for the Rhine. The same men get into the ministry too often.

If all the preceding facts and all these generalities had not been put into the framework of our drama—with the object, as will have been seen, of showing the spirit of these people—perhaps the drama would have suffered by it. This sketch, moreover, is quite true to history, and depicts a social stratum of some importance, especially when it is considered that the newer politicians have found in it their main support.

The winter of the year 1839 was, in a way, the season of the Thuilliers' greatest glory. The Minards went there nearly every Sunday. They began by spending an hour there on their way to other entertainments, and very often Minard left his wife there, going on with his daughter and his oldest son, the barrister. This civility of the Minards was occasioned by the meeting between Métivier, Barbet, and Minard, at a gathering where these two important tenants stayed a little later than usual to gossip with Mademoiselle Thuillier. Minard learned from Barbet that the old maid was taking about thirty thousand francs in securities from him at six months' date in consideration of seven and a half per cent per annum, and that she took an equal amount from Métivier, so that she must

have at least a hundred and eighty thousand francs to dispose of.

"I lend money on books at twelve per cent, and accept none but prime securities. Nothing is easier and more profitable," said Barbet. "I say that she has one hundred and eighty thousand francs, for the bank will not take her bills, excepting at ninety days."

"So she has an account at the bank," said Minard.

"I think so," said Barbet.

Minard, in some way connected with one of the regents of the bank, learned that Mademoiselle Thuillier had actually an account there of two hundred thousand francs guaranteed by a deposit of forty shares. This guarantee, however, was supposed to be superfluous. The bank was inclined to make allowances for persons so well known to it, and one who had the management of Céleste Lemprun's affairs, the daughter of a messenger who had been in the service of the bank from its very beginning. Mademoiselle Thuillier had never in the course of twenty years gone beyond the limit of her deposit. She always sent sixty thousand francs, drawn at three months, once a month, which made about one hundred and sixty thousand francs. The shares deposited amounted to one hundred and twenty thousand francs, so that there was no risk whatever, because the bills were always worth a full sixty thousand francs. "So that," said the bank auditor, "if she were to send us a hundred thousand francs in notes, we should not reject one. She has a house which is not mortgaged, and it is worth over a hundred thousand francs. Besides, all this paper comes from Barbet and Metivier, and carries four signatures, her own included."

"Why does Mademoiselle Thuillier work so hard,"

asked Minard of Métivier. "I should think she would suit your fancy," he added.

"Oh, as for me," answered Métivier, "I can do better by marrying one of my cousins. My uncle Métivier has told me all about his affairs. He has an income of one hundred thousand francs and only two daughters."

However secretive Mademoiselle Thuillier might have been, and however little she said about her investments, not even confiding in her brother, it was not to be supposed that some facts did not finally leak out as to the amount of her fortune.

Dutocq, who was making up to Barbet, and whom he resembled somewhat in character and physiognomy, had estimated more correctly than Minard the savings of the Thuilliers, when he put them at one hundred and fifty thousand francs in 1838, and by dint of the information derived from the wily bill discounter, Barbet followed the increase of their fortune.

"Céleste will have two hundred thousand francs in cash from us," the old maid had said in confidence to Barbet, "and Madame Thuillier proposes to make over to her the absolute ownership of her property in the marriage contract. As for me, my will is made. My brother will have everything for his lifetime, and Céleste will be my heir with that single reservation. Monsieur Cardot, my notary, is my testamentary executor." About that time Mademoiselle Thuillier had urged her brother to renew his former connection with the Saillards, the Baudoyers, and les Falleix, whose position was analogous to that of the Thuilliers and the Minards in the Saint-Antoine Quarter, where M. Saillard was mayor. Cardot, the notary, had brought forward his client in the person of Maître Godeschal, an attorney,

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aged thirty-six, Derville's successor, and an able man who had paid one hundred thousand francs for an interest in the firm, and who made pretensions for a dowry of two hundred thousand francs. Minard got rid of Godeschal by informing Mademoiselle Thuillier that Céleste would have as a sister-in-law the famous dancer Mariette of the Opera.

"She has withdrawn," said Colleville, alluding to his wife, "and she will not try again."

"Monsieur Godeschal is too old for Céleste, in any case," said Brigitte.

"And the child," timidly added Madame Thuillier, "ought we not to allow her to marry according to her own taste and to seek her own happiness?"

The poor woman had observed that Félix Phellion had conceived a real affection for Céleste, the sort of love that warmly appealed to a woman crushed by Brigitte and wounded by Thuillier's indifference, who had taken less notice of his wife than if she had been his servant. At twenty-three, Félix Phellion was a gentle, frank young man, like all students who pursue knowledge for its own sake. He had been scrupulously brought up by his father, who, taking everything seriously, had given him none but good examples, accompanying them with trite maxims. He was a young man of medium height, fair hair, gray eyes, freckled complexion, a very agreeable voice and quiet deportment. His gestures were few. He was a dreamer, spoke very sensibly, never contradicted any one, and, above all, was incapable of sordid thoughts or selfish calculation.

"There," had Madame Thuillier often said to herself, "that is the sort of husband I should have liked!"

About the beginning of 1840, the Thuilliers' social circle embraced the various personages whom we have just been

sketching. Barbet and Métivier, who each wanted to ask Mademoiselle Brigitte for thirty thousand francs, were playing whist with Messieurs Minard and Phellion. At another table were Julien the Lawyer, as Colleville called young Minard, Madame Colleville, Monsieur Barniol, and Madame Phellion. A game of *bouillotte* at five sou points was taking up the attention of Madame Minard, whom you will hear of again, of Colleville, of old father Saillard, and Baudoyer, his son-in-law. Leudigeois and Dutocq were just arriving. The ladies Falleix, Baudoyer, and Barniol, and Mademoiselle Minard, made up a set of boston, Céleste sitting behind Prudence Minard. Young Phellion was listening to Madame Thuillier, but looking at Céleste. In another part of the room, the Queen Elizabeth of the family sat enthroned in an armchair, as simply clad as she had been for thirty years, for no height in prosperity would have induced her to change her habits of dress. On her gray hair she was wearing a black cap of gauze with geraniums. Her skirt of raisin-colored veiling cost fifteen francs. Her embroidered collar, worth six francs, hardly concealed the furrows in her neck. Monvel playing at Cæsar Augustus in his old days did not exhibit a sterner face than that of the autocrat knitting socks for her brother. Thuillier was standing up before the fire, ready to receive the guests, and near him was standing a young man whose appearance had made a great stir, when the porter—who on Sundays put on his best coat to act as butler—announced Monsieur Olivier Vinet. Olivier Vinet had just been transferred from the Court of d'Arcis-sur-Aube to the Court of the Seine as deputy prosecutor. The notary Cardot had had Thuillier to dine with him, and the public prosecutor, who had the prospect of becoming Minister of Justice. Cardot estimated

the sum that would fall to Céleste at seven hundred thousand francs at the lowest. Vinet the son seemed charmed with the privilege of going to see the Thuilliers on Sunday. Large dowries inspire people to commit great and unblushing follies nowadays.

Ten minutes after, another young man, who was talking with Thuillier, before the deputy's arrival, lifted up his voice in the heat of a political discussion, and obliged the lawyer to follow his example by the energy he threw into the debate. The matter in question was the vote by which the Chamber of Deputies had just overturned the Ministry of May 12, by rejecting the grant asked for the Duke of Nemours.

"Certainly," said the young man, "I am far from sharing the dynastic view, and I am also far from approving of the accession to power of the middle classes. The middle class must not now, any more than the aristocracy once did, assume to be the whole State, but here you see the French middle classes have taken upon themselves to set up a new dynasty, a monarchy all to themselves, and this is how they treat it! When the French people allowed Napoleon to take the reins, they created through him something magnificent and monumental. They were proud of his greatness and they generously gave their blood and the sweat of their bodies to build up the edifice of the Empire! But the middle classes, between the aristocracy and the masses, are mean and sordid, and debased the name of authority to their own level, instead of rising to it. They practiced the cheese-paring economy of their shops on their Princes. What is virtue with them is a fault or a crime up above. I have a kindly feeling for the people, but I would not have cut down the new civil list by ten millions. Coming into almost

supreme power in France, the middle class is responsible for the welfare of the people, for dignified splendor without extravagance, and for greatness without privileges."

Olivier Vinet's father was just then in a mood of disapproval concerning authority, the cloak of guardian of the seals—his dearest dream—having not yet fallen upon his shoulder. The young deputy prosecutor, therefore, did not know what to answer, and he judged it best to devote himself to one side of the question.

"You are right, Monsieur," said Olivier Vinet, "but before showing themselves off, the middle classes have duties to answer for to France. The luxury that you speak of comes after those duties. What seems to you so reprehensible was imperative at the moment. The Chamber is far from being implicated; the ministers belong less to France than to the crown, and Parliament wanted a Ministry, like that in England, which lived by its own strength and not on borrowed influence. The day when the Ministry shall act on its own account and represent the executive power in the Chamber as the Chamber represents the country, Parliament will be very liberal to the Crown. It is upon this that the question hinges, and I say so without expressing an opinion, since my official duties impose upon me a sort of loyalty to the Crown, as far as politics are concerned."

"Aside from the political question," replied the young man whose voice and action betrayed a son of Provence, "it is none the less true that the middle class has misunderstood its mission. We see public prosecutors, first presidents of the courts, and peers of France riding in omnibuses, judges who live on their salaries, prefects without private resources, ministers in debt. Meanwhile, the middle class coming into control of these places ought to do honor to them as the

aristocracy did, and instead of holding them for the purpose of making money, as recent scandalous trials have demonstrated, ought to fill them without regard to personal expense."

"Who is this young man?" Olivier Vinet asked himself as he listened. "Is he a relative? Cardot ought certainly to have come with me here for the first time."

"Who is the little man?" Minard asked Barbet. "This is not the first time he is here."

"He is a tenant," answered Métivier, who was dealing cards.

"A barrister," said Barbet in a low voice. "He occupies a little apartment on the third floor in the front. Oh, he is not much of a fellow, and he has no money."

"What is that young man's name?" said Olivier Vinet to Monsieur Thuillier.

"Théodose de la Peyrade, he is a barrister," whispered Monsieur Thuillier into the deputy's ear. At this moment the women as well as the men were scrutinizing the two young men, and Madame Minard could not refrain from saying to Colleville—"He is very young, that young man is."

"I have been making his anagram," answered Céleste's father, "and his name gives a prophecy which may be interpreted thus: "'My dear Mother Minard, beware of giving him your daughter.'"

"That young man is thought more of than my son," said Madame Phellion to Madame Colleville; "what do you think of him?"

"Oh, as far as Alfred's appearance goes," answered Madame Colleville, "a woman might hesitate before making a different choice."

Young Vinet thought he could now do something exceedingly clever, as he cast a glance over this middle class group, by praising up the middle classes. And so he sided with the young Provençal barrister, opining that the people honored with places by the government ought to imitate the King, whose splendid style by far surpassed that of the old court, and that to make economies from one's emoluments was sheer stupidity. Was it possible, anyhow, especially in Paris, where living expenses had tripled, where an apartment fit for a judge cost three thousand francs?

"My father," said he in conclusion, "gives me a thousand crowns a year, and it is all I can do to live according to my official station with the aid of my salary."

As the deputy was cantering along this dangerous road, the Provençal, who had slyly led him on to it, was surreptitiously exchanging a glance with Dutocq, just about to take a hand in a game of *bouillotte*.

"And there are so many places being sought for," said the clerk of the court, "that there is a probability of two more magistrates being appointed for each district, so that we may have twelve more courts."

"I have never yet had the pleasure of hearing you plead," said the deputy to Monsieur de la Peyrade.

"I am an advocate for poor people, and only plead before magistrates," answered the Provençal.

While listening to the young lawyer's argument upon the necessity of spending one's income, Mademoiselle Thuillier had put on an air of ceremony, the meaning of which was quite well understood both by the young Provençal and Vinet. Young Vinet left with Minard, and Julien with the barrister, so that the possession of the field before the fireplace remained to young la Peyrade and Dutocq.

"The upper middle class," said Dutocq to Thuillier, "must behave as the aristocracy formerly did. The nobility wanted golden girls to maintain their estates, and our upstarts of to-day want large marriage portions to stuff their own pockets with."

"That is what Monsieur Thuillier told me this morning," answered the Provençal unabashed.

"Vinet's father," answered Dutocq, "married Mademoiselle de Chargebœuf, and assumed aristocratic opinions. He insists on money at any cost; his wife lived in royal style."

"Oh," said Thuillier with the envy of middle class people of each other, "turn those people out of their places and they will soon fall again to what they rose from."

Mademoiselle Thuillier was knitting at such speed that you would have thought that she was being driven by a steam engine. Madame Colleville was quietly examining the Provençal, comparing him with young Phellion, who was chatting with Céleste, without taking note of the conversation of the rest.

This is the proper moment to depict the strange personage who was to play such a significant part in the life of the Thuilliers, and who undoubtedly merits the distinction of being called a great artist. There is in Provence, and especially a part of Avignon, a race of men with fair or chestnut hair, soft complexion, and almost tender eyes, whose expression is rather mild, and calm or languorous, than lively, ardent, or deep, as is so often the case with the southerners. Let us observe in passing that among the Corsicans, people of violent and irascible natures, these fair men of apparent passiveness are frequently to be met with. And the worst kind of Provençals are precisely these pale types,

rather stout and with the somewhat watery eyes, which may be blue or greenish. Charles-Marie-Théodose de la Peyrade was a fair specimen of this race, whose constitution would deserve a minute investigation by medical science and philosophical physiology. There is always stirring within them a kind of bile, an acrid humor, which easily carries them away, rendering them capable of great ferocity, though to outward appearances they are cold. The result of a species of mental intoxication, this sort of fierceness is irreconcilable with their placid exterior and the tranquillity of their benign expression.

Born in the neighborhood of Avignon, the young Provençal, whose name we have just given, was of medium height, well proportioned, almost stout, with a complexion that was neither livid, nor pale, nor highly colored, but like gelatine, so to speak. His pale blue eyes ordinarily expressed a deceptive melancholy, which was of course a great charm in the sight of women. His well-chiselled forehead was not wanting in nobility, and harmonized with a fine head of light chestnut hair, which naturally curled at the ends, but very lightly. His nose, exactly like a sporting dog's, was broad, cleft at the end, intelligent, and inquisitive; but instead of lending him an appearance of good nature, the nose indicated the characteristic of mocking irony. But these phases of his nature were not very apparent, and the young man must have been thrown off his guard and given way to temper in order to vent the full satirical wit that poisoned his horrible jests. His mouth, cut in an agreeable curve, with lips as red as a pomegranate, was the instrument of a voice most suave in its middle notes, to which Théodose accordingly gave the preference in speaking; his higher notes vibrated to the ear like the

sound of a gong. His falsetto was truly the voice of his nerves and of his wrath. His face was oval in shape, and his manner, harmonizing with the clerical calm of his features, was all reserve and propriety. At the same time there was a smoothness in his demeanor, which without descending to servility had something of the seductive in it, but which was quite forgotten with his departure. A charm which has its source in the heart makes a profound impression; when it is only a product of art, like eloquence for instance, its triumphs are but evanescent; it will pay any price for effect. But in this life how many philosophers are there capable of setting up right comparisons? Almost always, to use a popular phrase, the trick is done by the time ordinary people have found its explanation.

With this young man of twenty-seven, everything harmonized with his real character. He followed his vocation in cultivating philanthropy, the only way in which philanthropy can be accounted for. Théodose loved the people because he made capital out of his love of humanity. In the same way that gardeners cultivate roses, dahlias, pansies, or geraniums, and pay no attention to the species outside the pale of their particular election, did this young man give himself up to the masses, the working classes, to the squalor of the suburbs of Saint-Jacques and Saint-Marceau. Men of capacity, neglected geniuses, the respectable poor of the middle classes—these he excluded from the bosom of his charity. Assuredly, vanity is the foundation of philanthropy, but, in the case of the Provençal it was calculation, a part he was playing. Liberality and democratic sentiments he pretended with a perfection that no actor could have equalled. He did not attack the rich, but was satisfied with not understanding them; every one according to him

should enjoy the fruits of his labor. He had been, he said, a fervent disciple of Saint-Simon, but wished this error to be attributed to his extreme youth. Modern society could have no basis but that of heredity. An ardent Catholic, like all the natives of his province, he went to Mass early, and made a secret of his piety. Like almost all philanthropists, he practiced a most sordid economy, and gave to the poor his time, his advice, his eloquence, and the money which he contrived to wring from the rich for them. He wore boots, and dressed in black cloth, which he wore until the seams were white. Nature had done much for Théodose in not bestowing upon him that masculine southern beauty which in other parts of the world leads to imaginary demands that a man has more than difficulty in answering to. It was little trouble to him to please, so that he could at his own choice be thought a very agreeable or a very ordinary person. Never since his admission to the Thuilliers' circle had he ventured, as he had this evening, to raise his voice and assert himself squarely enough to risk a breach with Olivier Vinet. But perhaps Théodose was not displeased at coming out of the shade to which he had hitherto always kept. And then it was of course desirable to get rid of the young lawyer, just as the Minards had previously ruined Godeschal. Like all superior minds—for he was not lacking in elevation of thought—the deputy had not lowered himself far enough to see the threads of these middle-class spiders' webs, and was now rushing head first into the almost invisible trap into which Théodose had drawn him with such guile as cleverer men than Olivier might have succumbed to. To complete the picture of this poor people's advocate, it may not be inexpedient to say something about his first acquaintance with the Thuilliers.

Théodose had appeared in public about the end of the year 1837. He had then been practicing law for about five years, having entered the Paris bar. But untoward circumstances, regarding which he observed silence, had prevented him from enrolment among the regular pleaders of Paris, and he was therefore still a probationer. But once established in his little third-story apartment, with only such furniture as was absolutely necessary to his noble profession—for the order of barristers will not recognize a new colleague who does not own a proper study and library, their existence to be duly verified on the spot—Théodose de la Peyrade became a pleader at the Assize Court in Paris.

The whole of the year 1838 he devoted to effecting this change of position, and he led the most regular life. In the morning he studied until dinner time, occasionally going to court for important cases. Having gained a connection with Dutocq—which according to Dutocq was a very difficult matter—he pleaded for several of the paupers of the Saint-Jacques suburb, whose names had been given him by the clerk of the court, and as he took none but very sure cases, he won them all. In this way entering into relationship with other legal officials, he became known at the bar for his worthy character, and thus a certain amount of credit accrued to him upon his admission to the society of barristers, and afterward at his acceptance as a member of the bar. He then became advocate of the poor before magistrates and continued to champion the rights of the people. The clients of Théodose expressed their gratitude and admiration for him to the porters, in spite of the young barrister's injunction, and many of these reports reached the ears of his landlord. Charmed at the idea of receiving a man of such high reputation and charity, the Thuilliers desired him to

enter their circle, and asked Dutocq for information about him. The clerk of the court spoke of him as jealous people are in the habit of doing, and, while giving the young man his due, took occasion to remark that he was extraordinarily avaricious, which was probably the reason of his poverty. Said he: "I have made inquiries about him. He belongs to the la Peyrades, an old Avignon family. He came here about the end of 1829 in search of an uncle, supposed to be very well off, whose house he discovered three days after his death, and the effects of the deceased were just sufficient to pay his burial and his debts. A friend of this superfluous uncle put a hundred louis into our fortune-hunter's hands, on the understanding that he would study law and pursue that career. With those hundred louis he defrayed his expenses in Paris for three years, during which he lived like a hermit, but being unable to find his unknown patron again, the poor student was in great distress for a time in 1833.

"Like all licentiates, he did something in politics and literature, and for some time managed to keep on the right side of poverty, for he had no expectations as far as his family was concerned. His father has a herd of eleven children, all living on a very small estate. He finally became attached to the staff of a ministerial newspaper under the management of the famous Cérizet, noted for the persecutions he underwent, at the time of the Restoration, for his devotion to the Liberals, and whom the adherents of the new Left refused to forgive for being the defender of the ministry. As to-day the authorities do very little for their most loyal servants, the Republicans at last contrived to ruin Cérizet. I mention this to explain how Cérizet happens to be a copyist in my office.

"Well, then, about the time when he flourished as the editor of a paper which, as the mouthpiece of the Perier ministry, answered the incendiary journals, Cérizet, who after all is a very good fellow, but a little too fond of women and good food and dissipation, was very useful to Théodose, who was writing political articles, and if Casimir Perier had not died, the young man would no doubt have been made a deputy judge in Paris. But in 1834 and 1835, he found himself in bad circumstances again, in spite of his ability, for his activity on the staff of the ministerial newspaper had done him harm. Had it not been for his religious principles, he told me, he would have jumped into the Seine. It appears that his uncle's friend knew him to be in distress, and that he sent him enough to take his barrister's degree; but he is still ignorant of the name and residence of his mysterious patron. In these circumstances, after all, his economy is excusable, and he certainly has a great deal of character to refuse what the poor devils offer him whose cases he wins. It is a miserable thing to see people speculating on the incapacity of these unfortunates to advance money for a suit unjustly brought against them. Oh, he will undoubtedly succeed! I would not be surprised to see that young fellow in a very fine position; he has perseverance, integrity, and courage! He studies hard; he is a plodder!"

In spite of the cordiality with which they had received him, Peyrade went to the Thuilliers at rare intervals at first. But as they complained of his reserve, his visits became more frequent, and he finally went every Sunday, was asked to all their dinners, and became so intimate with them that, if he happened to be with Thuillier at four o'clock, they made him stay to dinner and take "pot luck." Mademoi-

selle Thuillier used to say to herself: "Then we can be sure that he will have a good dinner, poor young man!"

A social phenomenon which has not yet been formulated or published, though it deserves to be, is their return to the habits, modes of thought, and manners of their original state of certain people, who in the interval between youth and old age have risen to a higher stratum of society. Thus Thuillier had relapsed, morally speaking, to the porter's son. He quoted several of his father's jokes, and allowed glimpses to be seen in his declining days of his low birth.

About five or six times a month, when the greasy soup was good, he said, as though he was making an entirely new remark, as he put his spoon back into his empty plate: "That is better than a kick!" Hearing this joke for the first time, Théodose, to whom it was new, lost his gravity, and laughed so heartily that Thuillier, handsome Thuillier, was tickled in his vanity as he had never been before. Ever afterward, Théodose met this phrase with a knowing little smile. This slight detail will explain how, the same morning of the evening on which Théodose had his encounter with the young deputy, he had found himself in a position to say to Thuillier, as they walked in the garden to see what effect the frost had had, "You are a great deal wittier than you think."

The answer he received was this—"In any other career, my dear Théodose, I should have done great things, but the Emperor's fall broke my neck."

"There is always time enough," the young barrister had said. "What on earth did that mountebank of a Colleville do to get the Cross of the Legion?"

There, Maitre de la Peyrade had touched the sore which Thuillier hid from all eyes so effectually that even his sister

did not know of it. But the young man, whose specialty was the study of all these middle-class folk, had penetrated the secret envy eating at the heart of the ex-assistant chief.

"If you will honor me, you who are so experienced, by being guided by my advice," the philanthropist had added, "and will on no account ever mention our compact to anybody without my consent, not even to your amiable sister, I will undertake to get you the Cross with the approval of the whole precinct."

"Oh, if we only succeed," Thuillier had exclaimed, "you do not know what I will do for you."

This explains why Thuillier had puffed himself out so formidably when Théodose had had the audacity to lend him opinions.

In the arts there is a degree of perfection above talent that is only reach by genius. There is so little difference between the work of genius and the work of talent that men of genius only can appreciate the distance between Rafael and Correggio, or between Titian and Rubens. More than that, the vulgar are deceived because the stamp of genius is always an appearance of facility. The work of genius, in a word, looks ordinary at the first glance, such is its naturalness, even when dealing with the loftiest subjects. Many peasant women hold their children as the famous Madonna of Dresden holds hers. Well, then, the height of art in a man of Théodose's calibre is to have it said of him: "He would have deceived any one!" Now in the Thuillier circle he saw an evident contradiction; he discerned in Colleville clear judgment, the critical faculty of the artist who has failed. The barrister knew that he stood in the bad graces of Colleville, who, by reason of circumstances already mentioned, was a reputed believer in the

science of anagrams. And none of his anagrams ever failed. He had been made fun of in the government's offices when, being asked for the anagram of poor Jean-François Minard, he had given the solution: "I amassed such a great fortune." Ten years after, events justified the anagram. Now, the anagram pertaining to Théodose was fatal. His (Colleville's) wife made him quake, and he had never made it known, for Flavie Minard Colleville produced: "Old woman Colleville, a tarnished name, steals."

Théodose had already more than once during the evening made advances to the jovial municipal secretary, and he had felt repelled by a coolness scarcely natural in such a communicative person. After the game of *bouillotte*, Colleville drew Thuillier into the embrasure of a window, and said to him—"You are allowing that barrister too much of a footing here; he led the conversation this evening."

"Thank you, my friend, forewarned is forearmed," answered Thuillier, inwardly scoffing at Colleville.

Théodose, who was at this moment chatting with Madame Colleville, had an eye on the two friends, and by the same instinct that tells women what others are saying about them across the room he guessed that Colleville was trying to injure him in the opinion of that weak and silly Thuillier.

"Madame," said he in the ear of the pious lady, "believe me that if any one here is capable of understanding you, I am. It is enough to see you, to say that you are a pearl dropped into the mud. You are not yet forty-two—for a woman is never older than she looks—and many women of thirty who are your inferior would be glad of your figure, and of that beautiful face which love has passed over without ever filling the void in your heart. You have dedicated your life to the service of God, I

know, and I am too God-fearing to wish to be anything but a friend to you; but you gave yourself up to him because you had found no one worthy of you. In fact, though you have been loved, you never have been worshipped, of that I am sure. Your husband, who has not given you a position worthy of your high character, dislikes me, as if he suspected me of being in love with you, and prevents me from telling you that I think I have discovered the way to put you into the sphere for which you were intended. No, Madame," said he aloud, "not the Abbé Gondrin is to preach the Lenten sermons at our little church this year, but Monsieur d'Estival, one of my countrymen, who has devoted himself to preaching in the interests of the poor people, and in him you will hear one of the sincerest preachers I know, a man of unpleasant appearance, but such a soul!"

"Then my wish will be granted," said poor Madame Thuillier. "I have never been able to understand those famous preachers."

A smile flitted on the lips of Mademoiselle Thuillier, and of several other people's.

"They are too much taken up with theological arguments; I have long thought that," said Théodose. "But I never discuss religion, and were it not for Madame *de* Colleville—"

"So there are arguments in theology?" asked the professor of mathematics innocently and pointblank.

"I do not think, Monsieur," answered Théodose, looking at Félix Phellion, "that you are asking that question seriously."

"Félix," said old Phellion, lumbering up to the support of his son, and catching a painful look on Madame Thuil-

lier's pale face—"Félix divides religion into two categories; he looks at it from the human and from the divine points of view; he considers tradition and common-sense."

"What heresy, Monsieur!" answered Théodose. "Religion cannot be divided; she insists on faith before everything!"

Old Phellion, nailed down by this objection, looked at his wife—"It is time, my dear," said he, looking at the clock.

"Oh, Monsieur Félix," said Céleste into the candid mathematician's ear, "why should you not be scientific and religious at the same time, like Pascal and Bossuet?"

The Phellions, starting for home, set the Collevilles an example, so that soon no one was left but Dutocq, Théodose and the Thuilliers.

The flatteries addressed to Flavie by Théodose were quite commonplace, but it must be observed for the comprehension of this story that the barrister tuned himself to the pitch of these vulgar minds; he navigated in their waters; he talked their language; his favorite thinker was Pierre Grassou, and not Joseph Bridau, the book of his heart was "Paul et Virginie." To him the greatest contemporary poet was Casimir Delavigne. In his opinion the highest mission of art was usefulness. According to him, Parmentier was worth thirty Rafaels; the man in the blue coat of the great Sistine picture looked to him like a sister of charity. These sentiments of Thuillier he sometimes remembered.

"That young Phellion," said he, "is the typical university man of our time, the product of science, which has pensioned the Almighty. Good heavens, what are we coming to? Nothing but religion can save France, for it

is nothing but the fear of hell that can preserve us from the transgressions going on in the bosom of every family!"

Upon this brilliant tirade, which profoundly impressed Brigitte, he withdrew, followed by Dutocq, after wishing the three Thuilliers good-night.

"That is a young man of resource!" said Thuillier sententiously.

"Yes, to be sure he is," answered Brigitte, as she blew out the lights.

"He seems to be religious," said Madame Thuillier, who left the room first.

"Monsieur," said Phellion to Colleville, as they passed the School of Mines, when he had made sure of there being no one in earshot, "it is fully within my habits to defer to the lights of my betters, but I cannot help thinking that the young barrister lorded it rather over our friends the Thuilliers."

"As for me," replied Colleville, who was walking with Phellion behind his wife, Céleste, and Madame Phellion, "I believe he is a Jesuit, and I do not like those people. The best of them are good for nothing. To my mind the Jesuit is a rascal. He is a rascal for the pleasure of being one. That is my opinion, and I will not take it back."

"I understand you, Monsieur," answered Phellion, who took Colleville's arm.

"No, Monsieur Phellion," remarked Flavie in a squeaky voice, "you do not understand Colleville, but I know very well what he means, and you will do best to say no more. Such subjects ought not to be discussed in the streets at eleven o'clock at night before a young girl."

"You are right, little wife," said Colleville.

On reaching the Rue Deux Eglises, where Phellion was

to turn down, there were general good-nights. Félix Phellion said to Colleville—"Your son François might enter the Polytechnique School, if he were pushed. I offer myself to prepare him for the examinations this year."

"That is hardly to be refused. Thank you, my friend!" said Colleville, "we must see about that."

"That is a good idea!" said Phellion to his son.

"Yes, it is not bad!" exclaimed his mother.

"What do you mean?" asked Félix.

"Why, it is a clever way of paying court to Céleste's parents."

"May I never solve my great problem, if I ever thought of such thing!" cried the young professor. "I simply found out in talking with the little Collevilles that François has a taste for mathematics, and I thought I ought to make a suggestion to his father—"

"That is right, my son!" said Phellion. "I would not have you otherwise. My wishes are fulfilled; I see in my son integrity, honor, and all the civic and private virtues that I could wish for."

Madame Colleville, after Céleste had gone to bed, said to her husband, "Colleville, you ought not to pronounce opinions so flatly about people without knowing them thoroughly. When you say Jesuits, I know that you are thinking of the priesthood, and I wish you would favor me with keeping your views of religion to yourself when you are in your daughter's presence. We are the masters of our own souls, but not of our children's. Would you like to see your daughter without religion? Now, my dear, we are at the world's mercy. We have four children to provide for, and how do you know but what at one time or another we may not want the assistance of this person or

that? So do not make enemies. You have none now as you are a good sort of fellow, and thanks to that quality in you, which is really quite charming, we have managed to get on in life fairly well!"

"Stop," said Colleville, throwing his coat on the chair and taking off his necktie, "I am wrong and you are right, my lovely Flavie."

"At your first opportunity, my dear boy," said the cunning dame, tapping her husband on the cheek, "you will make it a point to show that little barrister some civility. He is a very knowing little man and we must have him on our side. Suppose he *is* playing a part? Well, then do you play a part too. Pretend to let him dupe you, and then, if he has talent and a promising future, make a friend of him. Do you think I want to see you in that mayor's office forever?"

"Come, old woman," said the retired clarinetist smiling, putting a finger on his knee to show his wife where she was to sit, "let us toast our toes and have a chat. Whenever I look at you I am more and more convinced of the fact that the youth of a woman is in her figure."

"And in her heart—"

"In both," answered Colleville. "A light figure and a heavy heart."

"No, you great stupid, a deep heart!"

"Your best point is to have kept your complexion without growing stout. But then you have small bones! Anyhow, Flavie, if I had to begin life over again, I would not choose another wife."

"You know very well that I have always liked you better than *the others*. What a pity Monseigneur is dead. Do you know what I would like for you?"

"No.'

"A place in the city government of about twelve thousand francs, something like a cashier, either at the municipal office in Paris, or else at Poissy."

"That would suit me very well."

"Well, now, if that wretch of a barrister could do anything—he is versed in intrigue—let us keep him in hand. I will sound him, just leave it to me, and above all do not cross him at the Thuilliers'."

A young officer, two fops, a banker, an awkward young man and poor Colleville—these were sad experiences. Once in her life Madame Colleville had conceived of happiness, but her dream had not been realized. Death had quickly interrupted the only passion in which Flavie had found any lasting charm. For two years she had been giving ear to the voice of religion, which told her that neither the Church nor society speak of happiness and love, but of duty and resignation; that in the eye of these two great powers happiness lies in the satisfaction given by the fulfilment of duty, however painful or exacting, and that reward is not of this world. But her religion was a mask, not a reality, something that she expected to turn to good account. Her curiosity was greatly excited when she heard Théodose describe her state of mind without assuming any pretension of attempting to profit by it, but assaulting only the inner side of her nature with the purpose of awakening another illusion. From the beginning of the winter she was aware that Théodose was making a thorough study of her. More than once she had put on her gray *moire*, her best lace, and flowers in her hair, so to appear at her best advantage, for men always know when a woman is dressed up for them. The dreadful dandy of the Empire, Thuillier, was murder-

ing her with vapid flatteries, but Théodose said a thousand times more with a glance.

Flavie had been expecting him to declare himself from Sunday to Sunday. Said she to herself—"He knows I am poor and he has nothing himself. Perhaps he is really pious."

Théodose did not wish to hurry matters and, like a skilful musician, he knew the place in the symphony where he would hit the big drum. When he saw Colleville raising suspicions about him in the mind of Thuillier he had fired his shot, so cleverly prepared during the three or four months in which he had been studying Flavie, and had succeeded, just as in the morning he had with Thuillier. As he went to bed he said to himself—"The wife is on my side and her husband detests me. Just now they are quarrelling and I shall come out best, because she can turn her husband round her little finger."

The Provençal was mistaken in this, for there was not a vestige of a quarrel, inasmuch as Colleville was asleep by his dear little Flavie's side, while she was telling herself—"Théodose is a superior man."

A great many men, just in the fashion of la Peyrade, draw their strength from the audacity of the difficulty of an enterprise. The efforts they put forth develop their muscles, and they exert themselves strenuously. Afterward, whether they triumph or fail, every one is astonished to find them so small, insignificant, or worn out. After having aroused the minds of the two individuals on whom Céleste's fate depended to an almost feverish state of curiosity, Théodose pretended to be a very busy man. For five or six days he was out from morning until night, so as not to see Flavie again till her desire should have reached the point where

she would cease to regard the proprieties, and so as to compel the old dandy to call upon him.

The following Sunday he was almost certain of finding Madame Colleville at church. They in fact came out at the same moment, and met in the Rue Deux Eglises, and Théodose offered his arm to Flavie, who took it, sending her daughter on in front with her brother Anatole. This boy, then twelve years old, was to enter a boarding school, but in the meantime was a day boarder at Barniol's, where he was being instructed in the first principles, and naturally enough Phellion's son-in-law had made a reduction in the price of his tuition, in view of the prospective alliance between Félix Phellion and Céleste.

"Have you done me the honor and the favor to think of what I expressed so feebly the other day?" asked the barrister with a caressing voice, pressing the pretty churchgoer's arm to his heart, with a gesture at once gentle and strong, because he wished to appear respectful contrary to his instincts. "Do not misunderstand my motives," he resumed, as he met a glance from Madame Colleville such as women practiced in the science of love know how to dispense, and which may either denote a reprimand or a secret community of sentiment. "I love you, as one must love a fine nature, battling with misfortune. Christian charity includes the strong, as well as the weak, and its treasures belong to all. Refined, elegant and graceful as you are, made to adorn the highest society, who could without deep sympathy see you thrust among these odious middle-class people, who do not understand you, not even the nobility of your bearing or your looks, or the charming inflections of your voice! Oh, if I were only rich! Oh, if I only had power, your husband, a thorough good fellow, should be-

come receiver-general, and you would get him elected deputy! But, poor and ambitious, I have nothing to offer you but my arm, instead of offering you my heart. I hope for everything from a good marriage, and you may believe that I shall not only make my wife happy, but lift her up to one of the first positions in the country by the means of the money she brings me. It is a fine day. Come, let us take a turn in the Luxembourg."

Flavie's yielding arm indicated consent, but as she deserved the honor of a show of violence he dragged her along saying—"Come! Such a favorable moment may not occur again. Oh, your husband is looking at us, he is there at the window; let us go slowly—"

"There is nothing to fear from Monsieur Colleville," said Flavie smiling, "he leaves me to do just as I please."

"Oh, you are the woman of my dreams!" cried the Provençal in the ecstatic accents that flare up only from southern souls and issue from southern lips. "Your pardon, Madame," said he, recovering himself, and coming down from an upper region to the damaged angel whom he eyed piously. "Your pardon; I am coming back to what I was going to say! How should one be insensible to the pain one's self feels, when one sees an equal amount borne by a creature whose life ought to be all sunshine and happiness? Your sorrows are mine. I am no more in my right place than you are in yours. The same ill fortune has made us brother and sister. Dear Flavie! The first day that I had the bliss of setting eyes on you was the last Sunday in September, 1838. How beautiful you were. I shall often see you again in that little Scotch plaid dress. That day I said to myself: Why is that woman connected with the Thuil-

liers, and how does she come to have anything to do with such as Thuillier?"

"Monsieur!" said Flavie, frightened at the dangerous turn the Provençal was giving the conversation.

"Oh, I know everything," said he, accompanying his words with a shrug, "and I understand everything, and my regard for you is none the smaller. Come, yours are not the sins of an ugly woman or a hunchback. You must reap the fruits of your error and I will help you. Céleste will be very rich, and in that you shall find your future welfare. But you can only have one son-in-law; so choose the right one. An ambitious one may rise to be minister, but he will humiliate you, worry you, and make your daughter unhappy, and if he once squanders her fortune, he will certainly never make it up again. Yes, it is true that I love you, and I love you with the deepest affection; you are far above anything petty or foolish. Let us understand each other."

Flavie was quite amazed. She nevertheless was sensible to the extreme frankness of these words, and said to herself "This man is candid enough, to be sure," but she confessed inwardly that she had never been so profoundly moved and stirred as by this young man.

"Monsieur, I do not know who could have led you to any such suppositions as to my life, nor by what right you—"

"Oh, I ask your pardon, Madame," broke in the Provençal with contemptuous coldness, "I must have been dreaming, I was saying to myself, 'she is all of this,' but I see that I was misled by appearances. I know now why you will always remain on your fourth story up there in the Rue d'Enfer." And he accompanied this sentence with an

energetic gesture, pointing to the windows of Colleville's apartment, which were visible from the avenue of the Luxembourg, where they were taking their solitary walk.

"I was quite open, and I expected the same from you. Madame, I have sometimes been without food, but I contrived to make a living, to study law, to get my licentiate's degree in Paris with a total capital of two thousand francs, and I entered the Barrière d'Italie with five hundred francs in my pockets, vowing, like one of my compatriots, some day to be one of the first men in my country. And do you think that a man who has often picked up a meal from the baskets into which the leavings of the eating houses are thrown, do you think that man will shrink from any means —reputable means? Oh, you think I am the friend of the people," said he smiling. "Reputation requires a speaking trumpet. It is not audible coming merely from the lips, and without reputation what is the use of talent? The advocate of the poor will be the advocate of the rich. Have I disclosed myself sufficiently? Open your heart to me. Say, 'let us be friends,' and we shall all be happy some day."

"Heavens! why did I come here? Why did I give you my arm?" exclaimed Flavie.

"Because it is written in your destiny," he answered. "My dear, beloved Flavie," he answered, again pressing her arm to his heart, "did you expect to hear vulgarities from me? We are brother and sister—that is all."

And he turned back toward the Rue d'Enfer.

Flavie was experiencing the fear in the midst of her satisfaction that violent emotions bring to the female heart, and she took this terror for the sort of fright that a new

passion evokes. But she was fascinated, and observed profound silence as they walked along.

"What are you thinking of?" asked Théodose, half way home.

"Of everything you have been just telling me," was her reply.

"But," he rejoined, "at our age preliminaries are omitted, we are not children, and we both live in a sphere in which we ought to understand each other. Believe me," he added, as they turned into the Rue d'Enfer, "I am altogether yours." And he made her a deep bow.

"The irons are in the fire!" said he as he watched his dizzy prey.

When he reached home, Théodose found on his landing an individual who plays, as it were, a submarine part in this story, and who takes the place in it of a buried church over which stands a palace. The sight of this man, who, after ringing Théodose's bell in vain was trying Dutocq's door, made the Provençal barrister tremble, though he betrayed no external sign of emotion. The man was that Cérizet whom Dutocq had already mentioned to Thuillier as his copyist.

Cérizet, who was only thirty-eight years of age, looked like a man of fifty, so much was he aged by everything that can age a man. His hairless head presented a yellow skull, not quite covered by a discolored wig; his pale, flaccid, fiercely rugged visage looked the more horrible as the nose was partly eaten away, but not so far as to allow the substitution of a false one. From the bridge, at the forehead, the nose was as nature had made it, but the disease which had eaten the nostrils had left nothing but two ugly holes, which affected his enunciation and impeded his speech. His eyes,

once fine, were dim from use at night, and red round the edges. His glance, when it expressed a message of evil from his soul, would have terrified either a judge or a criminal, or even men who are frightened at nothing. His depleted mouth, where a few black stumps were visible, was like a hideous cavern; it was occasionally moistened by bubbles of saliva, which did not, however, overflow the pale, thin lips. Cérizet, a short man, not so much lean as dried up, strove to remedy his personal disadvantages by his clothes, which he kept in a state of cleanliness that, perhaps, threw his poverty into stronger relief. Everything about him seemed doubtful; everything was like his age, and like his glance; it was impossible to tell whether he was thirty-eight or sixty, whether his faded blue trousers, which fitted closely, would soon be the fashion, or whether they belonged to the fashion of 1835. His boots, trodden down at the heels, carefully polished, and soled for the third time, had perhaps walked ministerial carpets. His overcoat, laced with frogs, had been washed by many showers, and suggested departed elegance. The satin coat collar fortunately concealed his linen, but was torn by the buckle at the back, and the satin had been satined over again by a greasy substance distilled from the wig. When he was young, his waistcoat had an air of smartness, but it was one of those waistcoats bought for four francs from a ready-made clothing stall. Everything was as scrupulously brushed as his shining and worn silk hat. Everything was in harmony, and accorded with the black gloves concealing the hands of this subaltern Mephistopheles, whose earlier career may be described in a few words.

He was an artist, an artist of evil, with whom from the very beginning evil had been a success, and who, carried

away by his first triumphs, continued in his infamies, the while keeping on the windy side of the law. Having become proprietor of a printing house through the betrayal of his master, he had been fined as publisher of a liberal newspaper, and under the Restoration was one of the favorite butts of the royal government, and was known as the *unfortunate* Cérizet. This reputation of patriotism brought him the position of sub-prefect in 1830; six months afterward he was dismissed, but he claimed to have been condemned without a hearing, and made such a commotion that under the Perier administration he became editor of an anti-republican journal subventioned by the ministry. He left the newspaper to take up business, and became entangled in one of the worst joint-stock companies in the ken of the police. He served his term of imprisonment in a madhouse. The men in power, whose tool he had been, at last grew ashamed of a man come out of the foundling hospital, and whose scandalous and shameful transactions, in which a retired banker named Claparon was associated, had at length brought general reprobation upon him. So that Cérizet, falling down the social ladder, step by step, through pity obtained the place of copyist in Dutocq's office. In the depth of wretchedness, this man was plotting revenge, and as he had nothing more to lose, would reject no weapon. He and Dutocq were bound together by habits of equal depravity. Cérizet was to Dutocq, in their quarter of the town, what the dog is to the hunter. Cérizet, familiar with the wants of all the needy, practiced that species of gutter usury known as short loans. He had begun by dividing up with Dutocq, and that erstwhile Paris street boy, now become the fishwives' banker and the teamsters' broker, was the gnawing worm of two precincts.

"Well," said Cérizet, seeing Dutocq open his door, "since Théodose has come back, let us go to him." And the advocate of the poor allowed these two men to pass in before him. They all went through a little room into which the daylight shone through cotton curtains upon a small, round walnut table, and upon the walnut sideboard on which stood a lamp. From there they went on into a small room with red curtains and mahogany furniture covered with red velvet; the wall opposite the windows was lined with books of jurisprudence. The chimney-piece carried ornaments of a vulgar description, a clock on four mahogany wood columns and candlesticks with glass shades. The study, where before a coal fire the three friends were about to open a discussion, was the typical apartment of the budding barrister; the furniture consisted of a writing-desk, an armchair, a green carpet, short green silk blinds over the windows, a row of pigeon holes, and a sofa over which hung an ivory crucifix on a velvet background. The bedroom and the kitchen and the rest of the apartment looked out upon a courtyard.

"Well," said Cérizet, "are we progressing?"

"Of course we are," answered Theodose.

"Acknowledge," exclaimed Dutocq, "that my idea was capital, inventing the means of nobbling that fool of a Thuillier."

"Yes, but that is not all," said Cérizet; "this morning I am going to show you how to put the thumb-screws on the old maid and to make her hum. Let us understand each other. Mademoiselle Thuillier must be in this business: to have her is to capture the citadel. Let us not talk much, but let us talk well, as befits strong minds. My former associate Claparon is, as you know, an idiot, and will always

be what he has been all his life—a figurehead. He is just now acting in that capacity in lending his name to a Paris notary mixed up in a building enterprise, in which notary, masons and all are going into bankruptcy! Claparon is the scapegoat. But among the six houses which will be for sale in consequence there is a jewel of a house, built entirely of freestone, situated in the neighborhood of the Madeleine, very handsomely sculptured outside, and as it is unfinished it will fetch a hundred thousand francs at the most. By spending twenty-five thousand francs upon it, it ought to yield about ten thousand francs in rent about two years from now. By making Mademoiselle Thuillier the owner of this property we shall earn her everlasting gratitude, the more so as we shall let her understand that every year such opportunities are to be found; and because to work for the Thuilliers is working for ourselves, we must give her the advantage of that bargain. As for the notary and Claparon, we shall leave them sticking in the mud." As he finished his argument, the bell rang and la Peyrade rose to go to the door.

"Are you still satisfied with him?" Cérizet said to Dutocq. "He seems to me rather—well, I know something about traitors."

"He is so entirely at our mercy," said Dutocq, "that I do not even take the trouble to watch him, but between ourselves I did not think him as able as he turns out to be."

"Let him beware," said Cérizet menacingly, "I can blow him over like a house of cards. As for you, Papa Dutocq, you are in a position to see him at work; therefore, watch him closely! Besides, I know of the means of testing him by having Claparon propose to him to get rid of us, and then we shall be able to judge him."

These words were exchanged in low tones during the time that Théodose went to the door. When he returned, Cérizet was looking at the case in the study. "It is Thuillier," said Théodose, "I am expecting him; he is in the drawing-room, and he must not see Cérizet's overcoat," added the barrister, smiling, "those frogs would alarm him."

"Tut! you are the champion of the poor; that is your role. Do you want any money?" added Cérizet, pulling a hundred francs from his trousers' pockets. "Here, that ought to do." And he put the pile of gold on the chimney-piece.

"No matter," said Dutocq, "we can go out through the bedroom."

"Well, then, good-by," said the Provençal, opening the door which led from the study into the bedroom. "Come in, my dear Monsieur Thuillier," he called out to the dandy of the Empire.

"Well, my dear Théodose," said Thuillier, "we have been hoping to see you all the week, and we have been disappointed every evening. As Sunday is our day for having our friends for dinner, my sister and my wife asked me to come—"

"I have been so busy," said Théodose, "that I have not had two minutes to give to anybody, not even yourself, whom I count among my friends, and whom I particularly wanted to speak to."

"What? Then you have really been thinking seriously of what you told me?" asked Thuillier, interrupting Théodose.

"If you had not come to conclude the agreement, I should respect you no less than I do," answered la Peyrade, smiling.

"You have been assistant chief, you have some ambition left, and it is certainly a most legitimate one. Now come—between ourselves—when you see a Minard, a gilded crutch going to scrape and bow before the King and parading himself at the Tuileries, or a Popinot on the highroad to the Cabinet, and then yourself, a man broken down in the service of the government, a man of thirty years' experience, who has seen six changes of the administration! Come, come! I am candid, my dear Thuillier, I want to push you, because you will pull me after you. Well, here is my plan. We shall have a member of the general municipal council to nominate for this district, and you must be the man! You *shall* be the man! And one day you shall be the deputy to the Chamber for the district, when the elections come round again, and they are not far off. The votes which elect you to the council will be yours at the election for the Chamber—you may trust that to me."

"But how do you propose to go about this?" exclaimed the fascinated Thuillier.

"You shall know how in good time, but allow me to conduct this long and difficult affair; if you commit any indiscretion, I shall simply say good-day to you."

"Oh! you can certainly count on the absolute silence of a former assistant chief. I have had secrets which—"

"Very well. But now you must have secrets from your wife, your sister, from Monsieur and Madame Colleville."

"Not a muscle of my face shall move," said Thuillier.

"Good again," resumed la Peyrade, "and I shall put you to the test. To be eligible you must pay a certain amount in taxes, which you are not paying now."

"I beg your pardon, I am eligible for the municipal council; I pay two francs eighty-six centimes."

"Yes, but for the Chamber the rate is five hundred francs, and there is no time to lose, since possession for a year must be established."

"The devil!" said Thuillier. "To be rated at five hundred francs in a year's time—"

"By the end of July, at the latest, you will be paying that amount; my devotion to you goes as far as to make me impart to you a secret by which you can derive an income of thirty or forty thousand francs with a capital of at most one hundred and fifty thousand. But your sister has long had charge of your financial interests, which I am far from finding fault with, for she has the best judgment in the world. You must therefore let me begin by winning the affection and friendship of Mademoiselle Brigitte, in proposing this investment to her; and here is my reason: if Mademoiselle Thuillier had no faith in me, we should get into trouble; but is it for you to ask your sister to buy and enter the property in your name? The idea had better come from me. In either case, you can both be judges of the suggestion. As for my plan of getting you into the municipal council of the Seine, here it is: Phellion has a quarter of the votes of the district at his disposal. He and Leudigeois have lived here for thirty years, and are as good as oracles. I have a friend who has another quarter at his command, and the vicar of Saint-Jacques, who wields a certain influence, owing to his reputation, also controls a few votes. Dutocq, who, as well as the others, has connections among the people, will serve me also, especially if I am not acting for myself. Finally, there is Colleville, who as secretary at the municipality represents another quarter of the votes."

"You are right! I am elected!" cried Thuillier.

"You think so," said la Peyrade, in a terribly ironical tone of voice; "then just go to your friend Colleville, and see what he has to say! No success in the case of an election is ever secured by the candidate himself, but always by his friends. One must never ask anything for one's self; one must be asked to accept; one must seem to be without ambition."

"La Peyrade!" exclaimed Thuillier, getting up and taking the young barrister's hand, "you are a great man."

"Not as great a man as you, but I have my little qualities," answered the Provençal smiling.

"And supposing we win, how shall I reward you?" innocently asked Thuillier.

"Ah, there now—you will think I am impertient; but believe me, there is a sentiment in me that is an excuse for everything, because it gives me the courage to undertake anything. I like you, and I am making you my confidant—"

"But who—?" said Thuillier.

"Your dear little Céleste," answered la Peyrade; "and my attachment to you will answer for my devotion. What would I not do for a father-in-law. It is selfishness; I am working for myself—"

"No, no!" cried Thuillier.

"Well, my friend," said la Peyrade, putting his arm round Thuillier, "if I had not Flavie on my side, and if I did not know everything, would I be speaking to you about this question? Only do not broach the subject to her yet. Listen. I am of the stuff that cabinet ministers are made of, and I do not want to take Céleste without deserving her; therefore, you will not give her to me until the day when enough ballots are cast for your name to make you a deputy

of Paris. To that end you must get the better of Minard; so Minard must be annihilated. But since you must nurse your influence, leave them the hope of getting Céleste, and we shall fool them all. Madame, you, and I, we shall all of us some day be important people. Do not think that I am interested. I want Céleste without any marriage portion, but with prospects only. To live with your family and leave my wife in your company, that is my programme. You see, I have no schemes in the background. As for yourself, six months after your appointment to the general council you will have the Cross of the Legion, and when you are deputy, you will be made an officer of the Order. Your speeches in the Chamber—well, we will write them together! Perhaps it may be well for you to appear the author of some profound book on half moral, half political issues—as, for instance, on 'Charitable Institutions Considered from a Lofty Standpoint,' or 'On the Reform of the Pawnbroking System.' Let us have your name noised about a little—that will do some good, particularly in this district. I have told you that you should have the Cross and become a member of the general municipal council of the department of the Seine. So put your faith in me. Do not think of making me one of your family until you have the ribbon in your buttonhole, and until the day that you sit in the Chamber of Deputies. But I will do more still: I will see to it that you have an income of forty thousand francs a year!"

"For either of those three things singly you should have our Céleste!"

"That pearl!" said la Peyrade, raising his eyes to heaven. "I confess to the weakness of praying for her every day. How charming she is! And not unlike your-

self, by the way. But good-by. I am going to the Phellions to work for you. Of course, it is understood that you are a hundred miles from thinking of giving me Céleste! Of course, you would sooner cut my arms and legs off! Not a word about this, even to Flavie! Let her mention it to you first. Phellion will positively assault you this evening to get your sanction for his plan of putting you up as a candidate."

"This evening!" said Thuillier.

"This evening," answered la Peyrade, "unless I should not find him at home."

As Thuillier went out, he said to himself: "Now there is a superior person! We always understand each other, and, forsooth, it would be hard to find a better husband for Céleste. They will live in our house with us, and that is a great deal. He is really a very good fellow, a very good man—"

For minds of Thuillier's stamp a secondary consideration has all the importance of a capital reason. Théodose had behaved with the most delightful civility.

The house toward which the wily barrister was wending his way a few minutes after was the abode of the Phellions. The head of that family, owing to his civic virtues and the profound and general esteem that he enjoyed in the district, had kept his position as major in the National Guard for eight years. He was approaching sixty, and seeing the time near to unbuckle his sword, was in hopes that the King would reward his services with the Cross of the Legion of Honor.

The love of truth compels us to say—in spite of the fact that such pettiness was a blot on his fine character—that Major Phellion stood on tiptoe at the reception at the Tui-

leries; he pushed forward; he took secret glances at the citizen-king when he dined at his table; he intrigued persistently, without ever being able to get the distinction of a look from the king of his choice. This worthy man had more than once thought of begging Minard to second his secret ambition, but had never fully made up his mind to do so.

Phellion, the man of passive obedience, was a stoic in the matter of duty, a man of iron in everything concerning questions of conscience. To complete this picture by a physical description, we will add that, at fifty-nine, Phellion had "stoutened," to use a middle class term; his stolid face, marked with smallpox, had become as round as a full moon, so that his lips, which would otherwise have appeared as very thick, looked the ordinary size. His dimmed eyes, protected by blue spectacles, no longer smiled in the innocence of their clear blue. His white hair crowned with dignity features which a dozen years earlier had bordered on the silly and the ridiculous. Time, which works such unfortunate changes in fine delicate faces, beautifies those which, in youth, are coarse and heavy in outline. And this was Phellion's case. He filled the leisure of his old age with writing a short history of France, for Phellion was the author of several works used in the University *curriculum*.

When la Peyrade presented himself, the family was at its full complement, Madame Barniol just then giving her mother the latest news of one of her children, who was slightly indisposed. The engineering student was spending his day home. All in their Sunday best, and sitting before the fireplace in the wainscoted drawing-room (painted in two shades of gray), in second-hand armchairs, they felt

a thrill when Geneviève, the cook, announced the individual they had just been mentioning in connection with Céleste, whom Félix loved well enough to go to Mass to see. The sapient mathematician had put forth this effort that same morning, and jokes were being passed about on the subject, with an undercurrent of hope that Céleste and her parents would recognize what a treasure was at their beck.

"Alas! the Thuilliers seem bewitched by a very dangerous man," said Madame Phellion. "This morning he took Madame Colleville's arm, and they went to the Luxembourg together."

"There is something about that barrister," said Félix Phellion. "It would not surprise me if he had committed a crime."

"You are going too far," said Phellion the father; "he is cousin-german to Tartuffe, that immortal creation of our honest Molière; for Molière had honesty and patriotism for the foundation of his genius."

It was following this remark that Geneviève came in to say, "Monsieur de la Peyrade is here and would like to speak to Monsieur."

"To me?" exclaimed Monsieur. "Show him in!" He spoke with that solemnity in small matters which had a tinge of absurdity in it, but to which he had accustomed his family, where he was regarded as king.

Phellion, his two sons, his wife, and his daughter Rose answered the comprehensive salute made them all by the barrister.

"To what do we owe the honor of your visit, Monsieur?" said Phellion with severity.

"To your importance in the district, my dear Monsieur Phellion, and to public affairs," answered Théodose.

"In that case, let us go into my study," said Phellion.

"No, no, my friend," said the dry Madame Phellion, a little woman as flat as a board, who kept her face set in the sour grimace that she wore at her music lessons in young ladies' boarding schools, "we others will retire."

"Am I so unfortunate as to drive you away," said Théodose good-naturedly, smiling at mother and daughter. "You have a delightful home here," he went on, "and you want nothing but a pretty daughter in-law to let you spend the rest of your days in the *aurea mediocritas*, and in the midst of family joys. You certainly merit those rewards by your past career; for, as I have been told, my dear Monsieur Phellion, you are at the same time a good citizen and a patriot."

"Monsieur," said the embarrassed Phellion, "Monsieur, I have done my duty, and that is all."

At the word "daughter-in-law," uttered by Théodose, Madame Barniol, who was as like her daughter as two drops of water, looked at Madame Phellion and Félix with an expression which seemed to say: "Surely we are not mistaken?"

Their inclination to talk over the incident made these four people retire into the garden, for in March, 1840, the weather was fine, at least in Paris.

"Major," said Théodose, when he was alone with the worthy man, whom this title always flattered, "I have come to speak to you about the election—"

"Yes, to be sure, we have to nominate a municipal councillor," said Phellion, interrupting him.

"And it is precisely on the subject of a candidate that I have come to disturb your Sunday rest, but it may be that the matter will not take us beyond the circle of your family."

Phellion himself could not possibly have been more Phellion than Théodose was at this moment.

"I shall not let you say another word," answered the major, profiting by Théodose's pause (designed to deepen the effect of his speech); "my choice is made."

"Then we both have the same idea!" exclaimed Théodose. "Honest people may meet just like clever people!"

"This time I do not believe in your rule," replied Phellion. "This district was represented in the municipal council by the most virtuous of men, as he was the greatest of magistrates, that is to say, by the late Monsieur Popinot, Councillor of State. When the time came to fill his place, my nephew, the heir to his beneficence, was not a resident of the district, but since then he has bought and now occupies the house where his uncle lives. He is the physician of the Polytechnique School, and practices in one of our hospitals. He is a credit to this precinct. Upon these considerations, and in order to honor the memory of the uncle in the person of the nephew, several of the residents of this district and myself have resolved to put forward the name of Doctor Horace Bianchon, member of the Academy of Sciences and one of the coming lights of that renowned institution. A man is not great in our eyes only because he is famous, and the defunct Popinot was in my opinion almost a Saint Vincent de Paul."

"A doctor is not an administrator," answered Théodose; "and, besides, I have come to ask your suffrage for one to whom your dearest interests will compel you to sacrifice your taste, which indeed can be of no importance when it comes to considering the public welfare."

"Ah, Monsieur!" exclaimed Phellion, getting up, and striking the attitude of Lafont in "le Glorieux," "do you

think so little of me as to believe that private interests will influence my political conscience? As soon as it is a case of the public welfare, I am a citizen, nothing less, nothing more!"

Théodose smiled to himself at the thought of the conflict about to be waged between the father and the citizen.

"Do not thus commit yourself toward yourself, I beg you," said la Peyrade, "for the happiness of your dear Félix is at stake."

"What do you mean by those words?" asked Phellion, stopping in the middle of the room, and passing his fingers between the buttons of his waistcoat, in the manner of the famous Odilon Barrot.

"Well, I am here on behalf of our mutual friend, the estimable and excellent Monsieur Thuillier, whose power over the destiny of the lovely Céleste Colleville is sufficiently well known to you. Your son, a young man of whom any family might be proud, is paying his court to Céleste, and you could do no better to win the eternal gratitude of the Thuilliers than by commending your worthy friend to the suffrages of your fellow citizens. As for me, although a newcomer in this district, thanks to the influence which a few small benefactions to the poorer classes have secured me, I might take the initiative myself, but services to the poor are of little credit in the sight of the largest taxpayers, and, besides, my modest ways would ill accord with such a demonstration. I have devoted myself, Monsieur, to the poor and humble, like the sublime Popinot, and if I did not feel called to an almost priestly mode of life, which precludes the obligations of matrimony, my tastes, my vocation, would be to enter the service of the Lord, to join the Church. I make no fuss about it like the sham philanthropists; I do

not write about it, but I act, for I am simply a man who has entirely given himself up to works of Christian charity. I thought I had guessed our friend Thuillier's ambition, and I desired to work for the welfare of two beings made for each other by suggesting to you the means of entering Thuillier's rather cold heart."

Phellion was dumfounded by this admirably delivered oration. He was seized, dazzled, but he remained Phellion. He went up to the barrister, put out his hand to him, and la Peyrade clasped it in his.

"Monsieur," said the major in deep emotion, "I judged you wrongly. What you have done me the honor to confide to me shall die here!" he added pointing to his heart. "There are few men like you. Real goodness is met with so rarely that our weak nature is apt not to trust to appearances. You have a friend in me, if you will allow me the honor of calling myself so. But you shall know me, Monsieur; I should lose my own respect for myself if I proposed Thuillier. No, my son shall not owe his happiness to an evil deed of his father's. I shall not vote for a new candidate because of any interests of my son's. Such, Monsieur, is virtue!"

La Peyrade pulled out his handkerchief, rubbed his eye with it, and squeezed out a tear, and then extended his hand to Phellion, as he turned away his head:

"Here, Monsieur, we have the sublimities of private and political life in contest. Had I come to witness nothing but this sight, my visit would not have been in vain. Monsieur, in your place I would do the same! You are the noblest work of God—an honest man! You are a citizen after the heart of Jean-Jacques Rousseau! Many such citizens, oh, France! oh, my country! and what wouldst thou not rise

to! Monsieur, it is I who beg the honor of calling myself your friend!"

"What is going on?" exclaimed Madame Phellion, who was watching this scene through the window, "your father and that monster are embracing."

Phellion and the barrister went out into the garden to join the family.

"My dear Félix," said the old man, pointing to la Peyrade, who was bowing to Madame Phellion, "be very, very grateful to this worthy young man; he will do you more good than harm."

The barrister walked for five minutes with Madame Barniol and Madame Phellion under the leafless linden trees and gave them some advice that in the face of Phellion's threatening resistance to his plan was to bear fruit that evening, and whose immediate effect was to convert these two dames into two admirers of his talent, his candor, and his inestimably high qualities. The barrister was escorted to the door by the family in a body. Madame Phellion, returning to the drawing-room, said to her husband—"Surely, my friend, you, such a good father, will not spoil the best match our Félix could possibly make by an excess of delicacy!"

"My dear," retorted Phellion, "the great men of antiquity, like Brutus and others, were never fathers when it was a question of being citizens. The middle class has, still more than the nobility, which it has been called upon to replace, the highest obligations of virtue devolving upon it. We must prove our mettle. Let us be faithful to duty all the way up the ladder of the social hierarchy. Should I teach my family these principles only to reject them myself at the moment when I ought to apply them? No, my dear, weep if you like to-day, to-morrow you will respect

me the more," said he, seeing his dried-up little better half with tears in her eyes.

These fine sentiments were spoken on the threshold of the door over which was engraved the motto: *Aurea Mediocritas.*

"I ought to have put *et digna!*" added Phellion, pointing to the tablet, "but those two words would imply self-praise."

"Father," said Théodore Phellion, the future engineer, when the whole family had gathered in the drawing-room, "it seems to me that you are not forfeiting your honor if you change your mind regarding a choice which is, in itself, unimportant to the public good."

"Unimportant, my boy!" cried Phellion. "I may say between ourselves, and Félix shares my opinion, that Monsieur Thuillier is a man of no mental resources whatever! He is an ignoramus! Monsieur Bianchon is a capable man, who will do a great deal for our district, while Thuillier will do nothing. But understand, my son, that to change a good decision for a bad one, because of personal motives, is an infamous action, which may escape the vengeance of men, but which God will punish. Believe me, I am innocent of all reproach before my conscience, and I must leave my name without stain to your memory. Nothing shall make me change."

"Oh, my dear old father!" exclaimed little Madame Barniol, throwing herself on a footstool at Phellion's knee, "do not ride the high horse! There are many idiots and simpletons in the town council, and France goes on all the same. He will do very well, our friend Thuillier! Just remember that Céleste will probably have five hundred thousand francs."

"And if she had millions," said Phellion, "I would not

care! I would not vote for Thuillier, when I owe it to the memory of the best of men to have Horace Bianchon nominated. From his seat in heaven Popinot smiles upon me, and applauds me!" cried Phellion in exaltation. "It is thus that France is belittled abroad, and that the middle class is misjudged."

"My father is right," said Félix, coming out of a deep revery, "and he deserves our respect and our love, as he always has in the course of his modest and honorable life. I would not wish to owe my happiness nor my life to either a single pang of remorse of his, or to intrigue. I love Céleste as well as I love my own family, but I put above all my father's honor, and from the moment there is a question of conscience with him I surrender."

Phellion, with tears in his eyes, went up to his oldest son, took him in his arms, and said in a choked voice—"My son! my son!"

"That is all folly," whispered Madame Phellion to Madame Barniol. "Come, help me to dress, we must put an end to this. I know your father; he is in one of his fits of obstinacy. To carry out the suggestion of that good and pious young man, I want your arm, Théodore, so hold yourself in readiness, my boy."

At this moment Geneviève came in with a letter for Phellion senior.

"An invitation to dinner for my wife, myself, and Félix at the Thuilliers," he announced.

La Peyrade's magnificent and astonishing idea had upset the Thuilliers quite as much as it had upset the Phellions; and Jérome, without confiding to his sister—as he considered himself in honor bound to be faithful to his promise to Mephistopheles—had gone to her in great per-

turbation, and had said: "My dear little girl, we shall have swells to dinner to-day. I am going to invite the Minards, and I am writing to Monsieur and Madame Phellion to invite them also. It is rather late, but with them it does not matter. But as to the Minards, we must throw dust into their eyes and make some excuse, as I shall want to make use of them."

"Four Minards, three Phellions, four Collevilles, and ourselves—that makes thirteen."

"La Peyrade fourteen, and it might be well to invite Dutocq, who will be useful. I will go to see him."

"What can you be thinking about?" said his sister. "Fifteen to dinner—that means at least forty francs set spinning!"

"Never mind that, my dear, and especially be very sweet to our young friend la Peyrade. He is a real friend, as you shall see! If you love me, treat him as you would the apple of your eye."

And he left Brigitte in utter stupefaction.

"Oh, yes, I shall wait for proofs, sure enough," said she to herself. "I am not to be caught by fine phrases, not I! He is a nice boy, but before taking him into my heart I must look at him more closely."

After inviting Dutocq, Thuillier, having embellished his person, repaired to the Rue Macons-Sorbonne to Minard's house to throw his charms at the fat Zélie, disguising the impromptu invitation.

"Can you forgive me, lovely lady," said Thuillier, contorting himself into pose number two of his répertoire, "for leaving this invitation on my desk, and thinking that it had been sent? It is for to-day; perhaps I am too late—"

Zélie scanned her husband's face, who stepped up to

shake hands with Thuillier, and she answered—"We were to have gone to look at a country house, and dine at hazard at a restaurant, but we will give up the idea gladly, as I think it is exceedingly vulgar to go out of town for Sunday."

"We shall have a little hop for the young people, if there are enough of us, which I think there will be."

"Am I to dress?" asked Madame Minard.

"Certainly not," said Thuillier; "my sister would scold me nicely if you did. No, this is a family affair! In the days of the Empire, Madame, it was in the dance that acquaintances were made. In that brilliant epoch a fine dancer was thought as much of as a good soldier. To-day people are addicted too much to positive qualities—"

"Let us not talk politics," said the mayor smiling. "The King is a great and able man. I am an admirer of my own time, and of the institutions we have bestowed upon ourselves. The King, moreover, knows very well what he is about in developing commerce. He is at daggers drawn with England, whom we are injuring more by this fruitful peace than by the wars of the Empire."

"What a deputy Minard will make!" innocently exclaimed Zélize; "he practices speech-making at home, and you must help him to get nominated, won't you, Thuillier?"

"Let us not talk politics," repeated Thuillier, "but come at five o'clock."

"Will that little Vinet be there?" asked Minard. "He has an eye on Céleste, I think."

"He may as well go into mourning for her," answered Thuillier; "Brigitte will not hear him mentioned."

Zélie and Minard exchanged smiles of satisfaction.

"To think that we must stoop to those people for our

son's sake!" said Zélie, as soon as Thuillier was on the stair, whither the mayor had escorted him.

"So you want to be a deputy!" said Thuillier to himself, as he left the house. "They are never satisfied, these shopkeepers! Oh, heavens, what would Napoleon say if he saw the government in the hands of such people! I, at least, am an administrator! Gracious, what a rival! What will la Peyrade say?" The ambitious assistant chief went to invite the whole Leudigeois family to come in later in the evening, and went on to the Collevilles, so that Céleste might have time to put on a pretty dress. He found Flavie in a pensive mood; she hesitated to accept the invitation, and Thuillier put an end to her indecision.

"My old and ever young friend," said he, putting his arm round her waist, as she was alone in the room, "I do not wish to have any secrets from you. A great affair is in motion for my benefit. I do not want to say any more, but I do want to ask you to make yourself particularly agreeable to a certain young man."

"To whom?"

"Young de la Peyrade."

"And why, Charles?"

"He holds my destiny in his fingers. Besides, he is a man of genius. Oh, I know my man. He has lots of this," said Thuillier, imitating the motion of a dentist extracting a back tooth. "We must chain him to our cause, Flavie! And, above all, let us not show how necessary his influence is to us. I must appear to be doing all the giving."

"Then, do you want me to flirt a little?"

"Not too much, my angel," answered Thuillier with a fatuous smile.

And he went away without noticing the sort of stupor into which Flavie was plunged.

"He is a power for us, is that young man," said she to herself. "We shall see."

And this accounted for her dressing her hair with feathers. She donned her pretty gray and pink dress, showed her handsome shoulders through her black mantilla, and took the precaution of making Céleste wear a plain silk frock with a plaited collar.

At half-past four, Théodose was at his post. He assumed his innocent and almost servile look and his gentle voice as he was walking with Thuillier in the garden.

"My friend, I have no doubt but that you will succeed, but I find it necessary to enjoin absolute silence on you once more. If you are questioned on any point whatever, and especially about Céleste, you must have evasive answers ready, which will stop further inquiries, and of which you learned the art in your civil service experience."

"Very well," answered Thuillier. "But is this thing a certainty?"

"You shall see what a dessert I have prepared for you. Above all, be humble. Here are the Minards, leave me to talk to them. Bring them here, and then—"

After bows were exchanged, la Peyrade was careful to take up his station near the mayor, whom at the opportune moment he took aside, addressing him as follows—"Monsieur Minard, a man of your political importance would not come here to be bored without having some object in view. It is not for me to judge your motives; I have not the least right to do so, and besides, it is not my part here below to interfere in the affairs of the earthly authorities. But forgive my presumption, and be so good as to listen to a piece

of advice which I venture to proffer. If I render you a service to-day, you are in a position to render me two to-morrow; therefore, in case I should be conferring benefits upon you I am merely obeying the law of self-interest. Our friend Thuillier is in despair at being nobody, and he has taken it into his head to become somebody. He wants to be a personage in his district."

"Ah, indeed?" said Minard.

"Oh, nothing very great. He wants to be made a member of the municipal council. I know that Phellion, speculating upon the advantage of such a connection, intends to propose our poor friend as a candidate. Now you, perhaps, might find it advantageous to yourself to forestall him in this. Thuillier's nomination can be nothing but favorable to you—I mean to say agreeable—and he will fill his place very well in the council, where there are weaker members than he is. Besides, owing you so much for your support, he certainly will see through your eyes; he considers you one of the torchlights of the town."

"My dear sir, I thank you," said Minard. "You are rendering me a service which I can scarcely value sufficiently and which proves to me—"

"That I am not in love with these Phellions," answered la Peyrade, profiting by a moment's hesitation on the part of the mayor, afraid to express an opinion from which the barrister might conclude contempt of these same people. "I hate men who make capital of their integrity, who make fine sentiments their gold currency."

"You know them well," said Minard, "those sycophants. As for that man, the last ten years of his life is explained by this bit of red ribbon," said the mayor, pointing to his rosette of the Legion.

"Take care!" said the barrister, "his son is in love with Céleste, and he holds the key of the fortress."

"Yes, but my son has twelve thousand francs a year of his own."

"Oh," said the barrister shrugging his shoulders, "Mademoiselle Brigitte said the other day that she looked for at least that from an aspirant for the hand of Céleste. And after all, before six months are over you will learn that Thuillier has landed property to the amount of forty thousand francs a year."

"The devil! I almost suspected it!" answered the mayor. "Very well, he shall be a member of the general municipal council."

"In any case do not mention my name to him," said the advocate of the poor, who now went up to Madame Phellion to make his bow. "Well, my dear lady, how have you managed?"

"I waited until four o'clock, but the worthy man would not let me finish. He is too busy to accept such a position, and Monsieur Phellion read the letter in which Doctor Bianchon thanked him for his kind intention, and said that, as far as he was concerned, his candidate was Monsieur Thuillier. He is using his influence in his favor, and begs my husband to do likewise."

"And what did your excellent spouse say?"

"He answered: 'I have done my duty. I have not betrayed my conscience, and now I am for Thuillier, heart and soul.'"

"Well, then, everything is settled," said la Peyrade; "forget my visit, and claim all the credit of this idea for yourself."

With this he went up to Madame Colleville, assuming a most respectful attitude.

"Madame," said he, "have the goodness, pray, to bring your good Colleville here. There is a surprise for Thuillier in the wind, and your husband must be taken into the secret."

While la Peyrade was doing the artist with Colleville, and indulging in very witty pleasantries as he explained the matter of the candidature to him, Flavie overheard the following conversation in the drawing-room, which made her ears burn—"I should like to know what Monsieur Colleville and la Peyrade are talking about to make them laugh so much?" Madame Thuillier asked in her silly fashion, looking out of the window.

"They are talking nonsense, as men are in the habit of doing," answered Mademoiselle Thuillier, who often made attacks on the opposite sex through an instinct natural to old maids.

"I cannot believe that," objected Phellion gravely, "for Monsieur de la Peyrade is one of the most virtuous young men I have ever met. You know what a high opinion I have of Félix. Well, I put them on the same plane, and even at that would like to see my son with a little more of Monsieur Théodose's piety."

"He is, indeed, a man of great qualities, and will certainly achieve something," observed Minard. "As for me, he has won my approval—I will not say my patronage."

"He spends more money on lamp oil than on bread," said Dutocq; "I know that about him."

"His mother, if he is still blessed with one, must be very proud of him," said Madame Phellion sententiously.

"He is a real treasure to us," added Thuillier, "and if you only knew how modest he is! He never puts himself forward."

"What I can answer for," Dutocq went on, "is that no young man has ever held himself up more nobly in poverty. And he has triumphed, but at the expense of suffering—which is plain enough."

"Poor young man!" cried Zélie. "It hurts me to hear those things!"

"One's secrets and one's money are safe in his hands," said Thuillier, "and that is the best thing one can say of a man these days."

Just then Colleville and la Peyrade were returning from the garden the best of friends.

"Gentlemen," said Brigitte, "soup and the King must not wait. Give your arm to the ladies!"

Five minutes after this joke—well worthy of the porter's lodge—Brigitte had the satisfaction of seeing her table surrounded with the principal characters of this drama, who, by the way, were all to be assembled in her house, with the exception of the horrible Cérizet. The portrait of the old bagmaker would perhaps be incomplete if the description of one of her best dinners were omitted. The physiognomy of the middle class cook in 1840 is moreover a necessary detail in the history of manners and morals, and clever housewives will read a lesson from it. No one makes empty bags for twenty years without the object of filling some of them. Now, Brigitte had the peculiarity of adding to her spirit of economy the sense of wise expenditure. Her relative prodigality, when her brother or Céleste was in question, was the opposite pole to avarice. Indeed, she often complained of not being miserly enough. At her last dinner, she had related how after suffering agony for ten minutes she had finally given ten francs to a poor workwoman, whom she knew to be without food for two days.

"Nature," said she artlessly, "was stronger than reason."

The beef soup was almost white, because even on an occasion of this kind she impressed it upon the cook to supply a large quantity of soup, and then, as the beef would feed the family the next day and the day after, the less of it that went into the soup, the more succulent would it remain. The tureen was flanked by four dishes of tarnished metal. At this dinner, afterward known as the candidate's dinner, the first course consisted of two ducks with olives, with a large forcemeat pasty opposite, and an eel in sharp sauce with mince meat on endive to correspond with it. The central features of the second course was a majestic goose stuffed with chestnuts; a dish of corn salad adorned with disks of beet roots faced a tray of custards, and some sweet turnips offset a bowl of macaroni. This porter's dinner, intended for a festival banquet, had cost at most twenty francs, and the remains sufficed for the household for the next two days following, Brigitte's comment being—"Heavens, how the money flies when you entertain! It is dreadful!"

The table was lighted up by two atrocious silver-plated candlesticks, four branches to each, in which twinkled cheap candles known as the "Aurora" brand. The table linen was resplendent in its whiteness, and the old thread-pattern silvered plate was a part of the paternal inheritance, acquired during the revolution by Father Thuillier. Thus the affair matched the dining-room, the house, and the Thuilliers, who were never to rise above this standard of living. The Minards, the Collevilles, and la Peyrade exchanged a few smiles betraying a community of sarcastic reflections. They alone knew of superior comforts, and the

Minards' acceptance of such an invitation was sufficient proof of ulterior designs.

La Peyrade, sitting next to Flavie, whispered into her ear—"You see, these people want lessons in living. Upstarts that they are, they have the vices of the ancient nobility without their elegance. What pleasure it is to play on them, as if they were a bass or a clarinet!"

Flavie listened, smiling.

While the plates were being cleared after the second course, Minard, fearful of being forestalled by Phellion, addressed himself to Thuillier with an important air—"My dear Thuillier, if I have come to your dinner it was because I had a momentous communication to make, and one which does you so much honor that it must not be kept from your guests."

Thuillier turned pale.

"You have got the Cross for me!" he shouted, catching Théodose's eye, and trying to prove that he was not lacking in perspicacity.

"You shall have it some day," answered the mayor, "but I mean something better than that just now. The Cross is a favor depending upon the good opinion of a minister, while this is the question of an election due to the concurrent sentiment of all your fellow citizens. In a word, a considerable number of the voters of your district have cast their choice upon you, and want to honor you with their confidence by deputing you to represent this district in the Council of Paris, which, as every one knows, is the general council of the Seine!"

"Bravo!" called out Dutocq.

Phellion now rose.

"His honor the mayor has anticipated me," said he with

emotion, "but it is so flattering for our friend to be the object of the eager attention of all good citizens at the same time, that I cannot complain of only being second in line, and besides, all respect to authority! (bowing elaborately to Minard). Yes, Monsieur Thuillier, several electors were thinking of offering you a mandate in the part of the district where my humble dwelling stands, and there is this especially in your favor, that you were pointed out to them by an illustrious man (great sensation), by a man in whom we wish to honor one of the most virtuous residents of this district, and who for twenty years was its father. I mean the deceased Monsieur Popinot, in his lifetime councillor of state and our representative in the municipal council of Paris. But his nephew, Doctor Bianchon, one of our great glories, has declined because of his absorbing professional duties, the post which seemed to devolve upon him. While thanking us for the compliment, he recommended to our suffrages the candidate of our respected mayor, as in his opinion the most capable by reason of the place he has lately filled of exercising public functions."

Upon which Phellion sat down, in the midst of murmurs of acclamation.

"Thuillier, you may count on your old friend," said Colleville.

At this moment the guests were all touched by the spectacle presented by Madame Thuillier and Brigitte. Brigitte, as pale as though she were about to faint, had tears of joy streaming down her cheeks, and Madame Thuillier, her eyes staring out of her head, looked thunderstruck. Of a sudden the old maid rushed out into the kitchen, crying out to Joséphine—"Come down to the cellar, girl! We must have some of the wine behind the wood-pile."

"My friends," said Thuillier with a quavering voice, "this is the proudest day of my life! It is even more beautiful than the day of my election will be if I can bring myself to accept the nomination of my fellow-citizens (voices, 'Of course! of course!'), for I feel that thirty years in the civil service have left their mark upon me, and you will acknowledge that a man of honor must consult his strength and his capabilities before accepting a public office."

"I expected no less of you, Monsieur Thuillier!" exclaimed Phellion. "Excuse me! This is the first time in my life that I venture to interrupt a former superior, but there are circumstances—"

"Accept! accept!" cried Zélie; "we want men like you to govern us!"

"Resign yourself, sir!" said Dutocq, "and long live the future councillor! But we have nothing to drink."

"Well, then, let it be understood," resumed Minard, "are you our candidate?"

"You are expecting a great deal of me," said Thuillier.

"Come, come!" exclaimed Colleville. "A man who has worked in the galleys of the Finance Department for thirty years is a treasure to the town!"

"You are far too modest," said Minard the younger, "your talents are well known to us; they are a tradition in the Finance Department to-day."

"Your blood be on your heads, then," cried Thuillier.

"The King will be pleased with our choice, I can assure you," said Minard, puffing himself out.

"Gentlemen," said la Peyrade, "the mayor's influence, unlimited in the district and immeasurable in our own circle; the influence of Monsieur Phellion, the oracle of his battalion; the no less powerful influence of Monsieur Colle-

ville, ascribable to urbanity and open conduct; the influence of our clerk of the court, also most efficacious; and the poor efforts that I can put forth in my humble sphere of activity —these are our pledges of success. But success is not enough! We must triumph, and to obtain that we must engage to observe the deepest discretion on the subject of these present demonstrations. Do not let us expose our friend Thuillier to the obloquy of his rivals! Do not let us surrender his name to public discussion, that modern harpy, which is but the speaking-tube of calumny and envy, which is the weapon of dastardly foes, which casts aspersions on everything that is great, which sullies everything that is clean, which dishonors everything that is sacred! Let us do like the third party in the Chamber: let us be silent and vote!"

"He speaks well," said Phellion to his neighbor Dutocq.

"And he knows what he is talking about!"

Minard's son was green and yellow with envy.

"Well and truly spoken!" said Minard.

"The motion is unanimously passed," said Colleville. "Gentlemen, we are men of honor; it is enough that we understand one another on this point."

Mademoiselle Thuillier now appeared with her two servants in her wake. The cellar key was stuck in her belt, and three bottles of champagne, three bottles of old Hermitage, and a bottle of Malaga were put on the table, but with almost respectful care she was herself carrying a small bottle, which she put before her. In the midst of the hilarity caused by the abundance of good things, the fruits of gratitude, and which the poor old maid in her delirium lavished with profusion, various dessert dishes were brought in, piles of figs and pyramids of oranges, preserves and sugared

fruits, from the depths of her cupboards, which under no other circumstances would have figured on her table.

"Céleste, you shall have a bottle of my father's brandy, and you shall make us an orange salad!" cried she. "Monsieur Phellion, uncork the champagne; this bottle is for you three. Monsieur Dutocq, take this one. And here is one for you, Monsieur Colleville! You know how to make the corks fly!"

The two girls distributed champagne glasses and other wine glasses, for Joséphine brought up three more bottles of Bordeaux. "The year of the comet!" cried Thuillier. "Gentlemen, you have made my sister lose her head."

"And this evening we will have punch and cakes," said she. "I have sent to the chemist's for tea. Heavens! if I had known there was going to be an election, I would have put on a turkey!"

General laughter greeted this phrase.

"Oh, we have a goose," said young Minard, laughing.

"Barrels of good things!" exclaimed Madame Thuillier, as she saw that sugared chestnuts and meringues were about to be served.

The glasses were full; the company were all looking at one another; a toast seemed to be in order, and la Peyrade said—"Gentlemen, let us drink to something sublime."

Every one was astonished.

"Here is to Mademoiselle Brigitte!"

They got up, clinked glasses, and chorused—"Long live Mademoiselle Thuillier!"

Thus can the expression of general feeling produce spontaneous enthusiasm.

"Gentlemen," said Phellion, consulting a piece of paper, "here is to labor and its dignity in the person of our old

friend, now one of the mayors of Paris—Monsieur Minard and his wife!"

After five minutes of conversation, Thuillier got up, saying—"Gentlemen, to the King and the royal family. I add nothing. This toast says everything."

"To my brother's election," said Mademoiselle Thuillier.

"I am going to make you laugh," said la Peyrade into Flavie's ear, as he, too, rose.

"To the ladies—the charming sex to which we owe so much happiness, to say nothing of our sisters or our wives!"

This toast evoked general mirth, and Colleville, already in a very lively state, shouted—"You rascal, you stole my speech!"

His worship the mayor then rose amid profound silence.

"Gentlemen, here is to our institutions! From them spring the might and the majesty of dynastic France!"

"It is my turn!" said Colleville, in the attitude of a gladiator. "Attention! Here's to friendship! Empty your glasses! Fill your glasses! Now to the fine arts, the flower of social delights! Empty your glasses! Fill your glasses! Here's to another feast like this the day after the election!"

"What is that little bottle?" asked Dutocq of Mademoiselle Thuillier.

"That," said she, "is one of my three bottle of liqueur from Madame Amphoux; the second is for Céleste's wedding, and the last for the day when her first child is baptized."

"My sister has almost lost her head," said Thuillier to Colleville.

The dinner ended by a toast from Thuillier, prompted by Théodose, which was drunk in Malaga that made the glasses sparkle like rubies.

"Colleville has drunk *to friendship!* As for me, I drink, in this generous wine, *to my friends!*"

A warm hurrah greeted this sentiment, but, as Dutocq said to Théodose—"It is a crime to pour such Malaga down those vulgar throats."

"Oh, if one could only imitate that, my friend!" exclaimed the mistress of the house, making a noise with her glass as she sucked in the ardent Spanish wine. Zélie had arrived at the height of incandescence; she was terrifying.

"Do you not think, sister," said Brigitte to Madame Thuillier, "that we might take coffee in the other room?"

In acquiescence of Brigitte's suggestion, and in pretence of being mistress of the house, Madame Thuillier got up from the table.

"Ah, you are a great magician," said Flavie to la Peyrade, as she took his arm into the drawing-room.

"And my only object is to bewitch you," he added, significantly pressing her hand to his lips behind the curtain of the bay window, whither he had conducted her.

"Madame Phellion will play the piano," said Colleville; "everything must dance to-day—bottles, Brigitte's franc pieces, and our little girls! I am going for my clarinet." And he handed his empty cup to his wife, with a smile at seeing her on such good terms with Théodose.

"What have you been doing to my husband?" asked Flavie of the seducer.

"I told him of the scheme to make something of Thuillier, and I gave him a glimpse of the advantages of political influence, and the substantial benefits to be derived by both of you. Yes, Colleville and I are the best of friends. We shall be soon as good friends as he and Thuillier are, and perhaps even better, for I told him that Thuillier would

burst with jealousy at seeing him with a rosette. There you see, dear angel, what a sincere passion can do!"

"Yes, I admit that you are a very extraordinary man!"

"Not at all. My smallest efforts and my greatest are reflections from the flame you have lighted in my soul! I must be your son-in-law, so that we may never be separated. My wife—well, she will never be anything but a nurse for my children. But my divinity, my sublimity forever, will be yourself," he panted into her ear.

"You are a very Satan!" said she in a sort of terror.

"No, I am something of a poet, like all my countrymen. But come, be my Joséphine. I shall go to see you to-morrow at two o'clock. I have the most ardent desire to see your rooms, your furniture, the color of the hangings, and how everything is arranged about you. I want to admire the pearl in its shell!"

He was clever enough to leave her upon this, without waiting for an answer.

Madame Pron, Barniol by birth, had arrived with two boarders of seventeen, confided to her maternal care by families living in Bourbon and Martinique. Monsieur Pron, a teacher of rhetoric in a church school, was a type of the Phellion order, but instead of expanding on the surface in fine phrases and demonstrations, and of posing as a model, he was stiff and sententious. Monsieur and Madame Pron, the jewels of the Phellions' circle, received on Mondays. They were closely connected with the Phellions through the Barniols. Although a schoolmaster, little Pron danced. The great reputation of the Lagrave Institution, to which Monsieur and Madame Phellion had been attached for twenty years, had been increased under the management of Mademoiselle Barniol, the senior and most able assistant

mistress. Monsieur Pron commanded great influence in the part of the district bounded by the Boulevard Mont Parnasse, the Luxembourg, and the Rue de Sèvres. Therefore, as soon as his friend appeared, Phellion, without needing instructions, took him by the arm to initiate him into the Thuilliers' conspiracy, and after ten minutes of conversation they both came to speak to Thuillier, when the embrasure of the window opposite Flavie's no doubt witnessed a trio as great, in its way, as the three Swiss patriots in "William Tell."

Félix had gone over to Madame Thuillier, guessing that Céleste would soon be found at her side. This calculation was the more successful as young Minard, who saw nothing in Céleste but a dowry, was not thus inspired, but was sipping his coffee in a political debate with Leudigeois, Barniol, and Dutocq.

"Who would not love Céleste?" said Félix to Madame Thuillier. "I shall kill myself with work for her, or I shall become a member of the Academy of Sciences, and make some great discovery to win her by the force of fame!"

"Ah," said the poor woman to herself. "I ought to have had a quiet and gentle man of learning like him for a husband! But Thou, my Father in heaven, wouldst not have it so! But unite and protect these two children, who are made for one another!"

She remained pensive as she listened to the orgy of noise made by her sister-in-law, a regular dray horse for work, who was now helping her two servants to clear the room for the dancers. She was shouting like a ship's captain on his bridge preparing for a battle: "Have you any more gooseberry syrup? Go out for some barley water! There are not enough glasses! Get six more bottles of claret!

Take care the porter takes none! Caroline, my girl, stay at the sideboard—you shall have a slice of ham if the dancing goes on after one o'clock. No waste! Keep your eyes open! Pass me the broom! Fill the lamps, and let me have no accidents! Dress the sideboard with the remains of the dessert! Fancy thinking of my sister helping! I do not know what she can be about, that slow coach! Lord, how she dawdles! Here, take these chairs out of the way!"

The room was full of Barniols, Collevilles, Leudigeois, Phellions, and all who had come for the hop.

"Are you ready, Brigitte?" asked Colleville, breaking into the dining-room. "They will be packed as close as herrings in your drawing-room. Cardot and his family have just arrived with young Vinet, the deputy prosecutor. Shall we push the piano in here, from the drawing-room, eh?"

And he gave the signal to begin by tooting a few notes on his clarinet, these premonitory sounds being hailed with loud glee in the drawing-room.

It would be superfluous to describe a ball of this kind. The dresses, faces, the conversation—all were in harmony with the character of the refreshments—served on shabby trays, the worse for wear, on which were passed about glasses of wine and water, and of sugared water. The trays bearing the liqueurs and syrup appeared only at infrequent intervals. There were five card-tables, twenty-five players, and eighteen couples of dancers. At one in the morning, Mademoiselle Brigitte, Madame Thuillier, and Félix's parents indulged in a wild square dance, commonly called the "Boulangère," in which Dutocq figured with his head veiled, like a Kabyle chief. The servants waiting for

their masters, and those belonging to the house, looked on; and as this interminable square dance lasted an hour, they wanted to hoist Brigitte on their shoulders in triumph when she announced supper, but she found it expedient to put twelve bottles of old Burgundy out of sight. All enjoyed themselves so much, old as well as young, that Thuillier was able to say—"Well, this morning we had no notion of such a fine festivity to-night!"

"Nothing is more enjoyable," said the notary Cardot, "than these improvised dances. Don't talk to me of balls, to which every one comes dressed up to the eyes!"

This opinion is an axiom with the middle class.

The "Boulangère" over, Théodose took Dutocq to the sideboard, where he helped himeslf to a slice of tongue, saying to him—"Let us be off now, for we must be at Cérizet's very early to-morrow to get the information we want, which Cérizet will have found difficult enough to obtain."

"Why difficult?" asked Dutocq, bringing his piece of tongue into the drawing-room.

"What? Don't you know the laws?"

"I know enough to know that this is a dangerous enterprise. If the notary wants the house, and we try to spirit it away from him, there are means by which he can beat our game, as he can assume the part of a creditor. According to present laws regulating mortgages, when a house is sold by order of one of the creditors, and if the price fixed by arbitration is insufficient to pay all the creditors, they have the right to sell by auction. The notary will not be likely to make the same mistake twice."

"Well," said la Peyrade, "this phase of the question certainly deserves attention."

"So be it," said the clerk of the court; "let us go and see Cérizet."

"This has been one of the happiest days of our lives," said Brigitte, when she was left alone with her brother at half-past two in the morning in the deserted drawing-room. "How glorious to be chosen by your fellow-citizens!"

"Make no mistake about it, Brigitte, we owe it all to one man."

"To whom?"

"To our friend la Peyrade."

It was not on Monday, but on Tuesday, that Dutocq and Théodose went to see Cérizet, the clerk of the court having observed that Cérizet went away for Sunday and Monday, because of the entire absence of customers on those two days, on which the masses give themselves up to dissipation.

The coat with the frogs on it had already given a hint of the sort of hovel this shady member of society might inhabit. Over the door of a rickety entry swung a dilapidated lamp on which was painted the words: "Lodgings by the Night." The network of iron-crossed clamps on the walls attested the tumble-down condition of the establishment, whose proprietor was a wine merchant, and who besides the ground floor inhabited the next. The widow Poiret kept furnished rooms on the first, second, and third stories for workmen and the poorest class of students. Cérizet occupied a room on the ground floor and another on the first, to which he gained access by a private stair. The window of the upper rooms looked out on a filthy courtyard from which arose foul odors. Cérizet paid forty francs a month for his lunch and dinner to the widow. He had thus got into the good graces of the landlady by being her boarder, and had made a friend of the wine merchant

by regularly throwing an enormous number of customers in his way, even before daybreak. For Cadenet's shop opened before Cérizet's office, who began operations on Tuesday mornings, at three in the summer and at five in the winter.

The opening of the central market, for which many of his clients, male and female, were bound, was the hour that regulated the hours of his horrible business. And Cadenet, in consideration of the clientage due to Cérizet, let him have his two rooms for eighty francs a year, and had signed a lease for twelve years, which Cérizet was privileged to cancel at pleasure without compensation, at three months' notice. Cadenet every day contributed an excellent bottle of wine for the dinner of this valuable tenant, and whenever Cérizet was without funds, he had only to say to his friend: "Cadenet, loan me a hundred crowns." But he always paid him back faithfully.

It was said that Cadenet knew that the widow Poiret had intrusted two thousand francs to Cérizet, which was, perhaps, an explanation of his prosperity since the day when he had set up as a money-lender with his last thousand-franc note and Dutocq's patronage.

The short-loan usurer was in perfect safety in this retreat, where he might, if necessary, get help from strong hands. On some mornings there were not less than sixty to eighty persons, women as well as men, either at the wine merchant's or in the hall, or sitting on the steps, or else in the office, where the suspicious Cérizet never admitted more than six at a time. Every one was interviewed in order, for his rule was "first come, first served." Cérizet was the object of revilement on Sunday mornings, when accounts had to be settled, and they cursed him on Saturdays, when they were toiling to refund principal and interest. But he was

Providence, he was the Deity, from Tuesday to Friday of every week. Cérizet had a way of endearing himself to his customers by his jovial sallies of wit in their own language, though he always took the precaution of hiding the cash for his morning's transactions in the cushion of the chair he sat on, of taking out no more than one hundred francs at a time —which he put into his trousers pockets—and of never drawing upon his reserve, excepting between customers and behind closed doors. In spite of this, he had nothing to fear from all these desperates, who came humbly to the fountain of gold.

The short-loan system, as practiced by Cérizet, is not, all things considered, such a cruel evil as the pawnshop. Cérizet paid over ten francs on Tuesday on condition of receiving twelve on Sunday morning. In five weeks he thus doubled his capital, and his transactions were very many. His good nature consisted in being occasionally satisfied with eleven francs and a half, and allowing the balance to stand over. When he gave a small fruit vender fifty francs or sixty, he ran some risks, or if he loaned one hundred francs for one hundred and twenty to a peat-seller.

Théodose and Dutocq, coming down the street, saw a mob of men and women, and by the light of the wine merchant's lamps were alarmed at perceiving this crowd of flushed, begrimed faces, dejected from sheer misery, emaciated or scarred, withered or wine-sodden; some of them threatening, others resigned; some jeering, some ironical, some vacuous; all peering from such appalling rags as no painter could exaggerate, even in his most extravagant mood.

"I shall be recognized," said Théodose, dragging Dutocq

away; "we have made a mistake to interrupt him at his business."

"The more especially as we did not think that Claparon was asleep in bed, and his house arrangements are not known to us. But stay, if there are difficulties in your way, there are none in mine; I might have to speak to my copyist, you see, and ask him to come to dinner because there is a session at court to-day, and there will be no time for lunch. We can meet at the Cheval Rouge at seven o'clock."

So Dutocq went alone into the middle of this congress of beggars, and he heard his name repeated on all sides, for he could scarcely fail to be recognized by some erstwhile criminal, just as Théodose would have met some of his clients there. They made room for the clerk of the court, a person of not less authority than the magistrate himself. He saw the women sitting on the steps, a horrible display —many of them being young, pale and sick, and wearing the sorriest of garments. Dutocq was almost asphyxiated when he opened the door of the room where sixty unsavory people had already been interviewed. Deep silence prevailed. Dutocq found his copyist clad in a waistcoat of yellow leather like a policeman's gloves, and over it a squalid vest of knitted wool. It may be imagined what this unhealthy face looked like above such a costume, the framework of the picture being completed by an untidy handkerchief tied round his head, the whole scene illuminated by a single tallow candle.

"I cannot deal with you on those terms, Papa Lantimèche," Cérizet was saying to a tall old man, who looked about seventy years old and who was standing before him, red woollen cap in hand, his skin showing under a torn

blouse. "Tell me what you want to do with the money. A hundred francs even on condition of paying back one hundred and twenty, that's different from letting a dog loose in a church!"

The five other customers present, of whom one was knitting and another suckling her baby, burst out laughing.

When he set eyes upon Dutocq, Cérizet rose respectfully and went toward him, as he added: "You had better take time to think it over; because, you see, I am doubtful about loaning a sum of one hundred francs to a locksmith's man."

"But I have an invention!" cried the old workman.

"An invention and one hundred francs! You do not know the law; you want two thousand francs," said Dutocq. "And you must have patronage."

"That is true," said Cérizet, who often relied on accidents of this kind. "Come back to-morrow morning at six, Papa Lantimèche, and we will discuss the matter again. It is not proper to talk inventions before others."

"If there is anything in it, half shares!" said Dutocq to the money-lender after the old man had left.

"Why did you get up so early to come here to tell me that?" asked the suspicious Cérizet, resenting the *half shares*. "You would have seen me at your office." And he looked slyly at Dutocq, who, while telling him the truth about Claparon and the urgency of Théodose's affair, seemed to be entangling himself.

"Nevertheless, you would have seen me this morning at the office," answered Cérizet again, as he walked to the door with Dutocq.

"There is a man," said he going back to his seat, "who seems to me to have blown out his own lantern so that I may not see. Very well, we can give up our copyist's place."

It is the less necessary to detail the interview of the three associates, as the arrangements made corresponded to the confidences made Mademoiselle Thuillier by Théodose, although we may remark that la Peyrade's cleverness almost startled Cérizet and Dutocq. At this conference, the poor people's banker conceived the notion of getting out of a game which he was playing against such strong players. To win at any cost and get the better of the sharpest minds, even by cheating, is an inspiration of vanity peculiar to lovers of the green cloth. Hence the terrible blow that la Peyrade was to be dealt.

The day after the meeting, la Peyrade was dining with the Thuilliers, and under the transparent pretext of a visit to Madame de Saint-Foudrille, the wife of the distinguished man of science, Thuillier carried off his wife, leaving Théodose with Brigitte. Neither Thuillier, nor his sister, nor Théodose was deceived by this comedy, and the old dandy of the Empire dignified this performance with the name of "diplomacy."

"Has your brother spoken to you?" began la Peyrade.

"No, he only told me that you wished to speak to me."

"Yes, Mademoiselle, because you are the man of the family; but after turning the matter over thoroughly in my mind, I see that there is a great deal of danger for me in this affair, and one only compromises one's self for one's relatives. It is a question of a whole fortune, thirty to forty thousand francs of income, without any speculation or risks —a solid investment! The necessity of putting a fortune into Thuillier's hands dazzled me from the first. It was a fascinating idea, and, as I told him, for any one, but a fool would ask himself: 'What is his object in being so kind?' —for, as I told him, by working for him, I flattered myself

that I was working for my own good too. If he wants to be deputy, two things are absolutely imperative: to pay the tax rate and to get his name noised about. If I carry my devotion so far as to help him write a book on Public Credit, or on any other subject, I must think just as much of his cash fortune. Of course it would be absurd of you to give him this house."

"Give my brother this house? Why, I would transfer it to his name to-morrow!" cried Brigitte. "You do not know me. But this affair, now," said Brigitte, "what is the difficulty about it?"

"Mademoiselle, the difficulties are in my conscience, and I certainly cannot serve you without consulting my father confessor. But since you desire it, I will outline the thing very plainly, and pray observe that I am risking my good name in telling you, since I owe these secrets to my position as a lawyer. So, you see that we shall be committing a species of high treason together! A Paris notary went into partnership with an architect, and they bought land and built on it. Owing to mistakes in their calculations, they failed. Among the houses put up by this illicit partnership—for notaries are not allowed to go into business—there is one, which being unfinished has suffered such depreciation that it will be sold for a hundred thousand francs at the most, although the land and the expense of building amounted to four hundred thousand francs. As nothing but the interior remains to be completed, no greater outlay than fifty thousand francs would be necessary for this purpose. Now, because of its situation, the house will yield more than forty thousand francs a year in rent, taxes paid. But there is this obstacle: the notary has reserved this share of the cake for himself, and he has a friend acting for him

as a creditor demanding the sale of the property by the assignees. There was no lawsuit, as that would have been too expensive; the sale is to be voluntary."

"That is done in trade, I know!" said Brigitte eagerly.

"True, Mademoiselle, if we can catch this slippery notary; but it may be very difficult to catch him again. When you buy landed property, if those who have loaned money on it are afraid of losing it, because of a low price, they are entitled after a certain lapse of time to raise the price by offering more themselves, and thus they become owners of the property. If this intending purchaser cannot be held off until after the time allowed for raising the bid, some new scheme must be found in place of the first. But would such a transaction be quite legal? Would one be justified in lending one's self to it for the benefit of the family one hopes to belong to? That is what I have been asking myself for three days."

Brigitte, it must be confessed, was at a loss what to say, and Théodose then played his last card: "Take the night to think it over; to-morrow we will talk about it again."

"Listen, my dear boy," said Brigitte, looking at the barrister almost amorously, "the first thing is to see the house. Where is it?"

"In the neighborhood of the Madeleine. In ten years that will be the heart of Paris! The house can without doubt be finished by the end of this year, and tenants can be taken in toward the middle of next year."

"Shall we go to-morrow?"

"My lovely aunt, I am at your orders."

"Hush, never call me that in public. As to the business affair," she resumed, "we cannot come to a decision without seeing the house."

"It has six floors, nine front windows, a very fine court-yard, four shops, and it stands on a corner lot. Oh, the notary made no mistake about it, you may be sure! But let any political tempest rise, and down go securities! In your place, I would sell everything that Madame Thuillier owns, and all that you own, in the public funds, so as to buy this splendid property for Thuillier."

Brigitte was licking her lips. She saw a way of keeping her own capital, and of enriching her brother at the expense of Madame Thuillier.

"My brother is right," said she to Théodose, "you are a man in a thousand, and you will certainly do great things."

"Ah, but he will always be in front of me!" answered Théodose with touching simplicity.

"You will be one of the family," said she.

"There may be opposition," replied Théodose; "Madame Thuillier is rather silly, and does not like me."

"Oh, we shall see about that!" cried Brigitte. "Let us make the bargain if it is feasible, and do you leave your interests in my hands."

"Thuillier as a member of the municipal council, owning a house, let for at least forty thousand francs, having earned the Cross of the Legion of Honor, the author of an important and serious political work—Thuillier will certainly be elected deputy at one of the coming elections. But between ourselves, my dear little aunt, such devotion is only possible to one's own father-in-law."

"You are right."

"Although I have no fortune, I shall have doubled yours, and if this affair goes off quietly I shall look for more like it."

"However, before seeing the house," said Mademoiselle Thuillier, "I can give no decided answer."

"Well, then, take a carriage to-morrow, and we will go to see it. I will bring a ticket to-morrow morning, which will allow us into the building."

"To-morrow, then, at noon," answered Brigitte, putting out her hand to Théodose, who deposited upon it the most tender and the most respectful kiss that Brigitte had ever received.

"Good-by, my boy!" said she when he was at the door.

She rang for her servant, to whom she said—"Joséphine, go to Madame Colleville at once, and ask her to come here to see me."

A quarter of an hour later Flavie entered Brigitte's drawing-room, where she was walking up and down in a state of tremendous excitement.

"My dear little friend, I want you to do me a very great service in a matter that also concerns our Céleste. You know Tullia, the dancer at the Opera? My brother used to talk my ears full about her."

"Yes, my dear, but she is a dancer no longer. She is Madame la Comtesse de Bruel. Her husband is a peer of France."

"Are you still friends?"

"We do not see each other now."

"Well, I happen to know that Chaffaroux, the rich contractor, is her uncle," said the old maid. "He is old, and he is wealthy. Go to your former friend, and get a few lines to her uncle, saying that he can render her a great service by giving his advice on a matter which you will consult him about. We shall then catch him at home to-morrow at one o'clock. But the niece must enjoin secrecy upon her

uncle. Our dear Céleste shall be a millionnairess, and from my hands she shall have a husband who will put her on a pinnacle."

"You want me to tell you the first letter of his name?"

"Why, is it—?"

"Théodose de la Peyrade! You are right; he is a man who with the support of a woman like you may become a cabinet minister."

"God himself has sent him to our house," said the old maid.

Monsieur and Madame Thuillier returned just then.

Five days after, in the month of April, the writ summoning the electors to nominate a member of the municipal council on the twentieth of the same month was printed in the "Moniteur," and posted about Paris. Brigitte was in the best of humor, having been able to verify Théodose's statements. The house he had described was examined from top to bottom by Chaffaroux, and pronounced by him to be a marvel of the builder's craft; poor Grindot, the architect in charge of the notary's affairs and Claparon's, supposed he was working for the contractor; Madame de Bruel's uncle, believing his niece's interests to be involved, had said that he would finish the house with thirty thousand francs, and so for a week la Peyrade had been Brigitte's divinity. She demonstrated to him by the most innocently iniquitous arguments that fortunes must be pounced upon when and wherever they appeared.

"Well, if there is any wrong in it," said she to him in the garden, "you can confess it as a sin."

"Come, come!" cried Thuillier, "one's first duty is to one's relatives!"

"That is what I shall do," answered la Peyrade in an

intense tone, "but on conditions to be named by myself. In marrying Céleste, I do not want to be reproached with greed, with cupidity; if you heap remorse upon me, at least suffer me to remain what I am in the eyes of the public. Give no more to Céleste, my dear old fellow, than the reversion of the house I am going to get you."

"That is fair enough."

"Do not rob yourself," Théodose went on; "and let my dear little aunt lose nothing by the marriage contract. Put the rest of your available funds in Madame Thuillier's name in government bonds, and let her do what she likes with them. We shall all live together, and I will undertake to make my own fortune, once relieved from anxiety as to the future."

"That suits me," exclaimed Thuillier. "Those are the words of an honest man."

"Let me kiss you on the forehead, my dear child," said Mademoiselle Thuillier. "But as of course there must be a dowry, we shall settle sixty thousand francs upon Céleste."

"As pin money," added la Peyrade.

"We are honorable persons, all three of us!" cried Thuillier. "It is understood, then, you manage the business of the house for us, we write my political work together, and you bestir yourself to get the Cross for me!"

The thirtieth of April, Thuillier was proclaimed member of the general council of the department of the Seine, by an overwhelming majority. The first of May, Thuillier joined the body of councillors to go to the Tuileries, to congratulate the King on his birthday, and he came back radiant. He was following in the wake of Minard.

Ten days later, a yellow placard advertised the voluntary sale of the house, the upset price to be put at seventy five

thousand francs, final adjudication to take place at the end of July. In this connection, an agreement was come to between Claparon and Cérizet, by which Cérizet guaranteed the sum of fifteen thousand francs (verbally, of course) to Claparon, in case he should put off the notary beyond the date allowable for a higher bid. Mademoiselle, informed of this by Théodose, willingly adhered to the clause of secrecy, fully understanding that the authors of this amiable treason must be paid. The amount was to pass through the hands of the worthy barrister. Claparon had a midnight meeting with his accomplice, the notary, whose official place and custom, though put up for sale by edict of the Paris notaries' Court of Discipline, had not been disposed of.

This young man, successor to Leopold Hannequin, had tried to run to a fortune, instead of walking there. He still saw other prospects and thought he could set everything straight. At this interview he had gone as far as ten thousand francs to buy security for himself in this dirty business. He was only to pay the money over to Claparon after the delivery of a counter-deed signed by the purchaser. The notary knew that this was all the capital at Claparon's disposal to found another fortune with, and so he thought he held him. "Who else in all Paris would give me such a commission for such a piece of business," said Claparon to him with assumed innocence. "You need not stay awake at night. I shall have an ostensible purchaser, one of those men of honor too stupid to have ideas like yours. He is a retired government clerk. You will hand him the money to be paid over, and he will sign his name to the counter-deed."

When the notary had plainly shown Claparon that he could only get ten thousand francs out of him, Cérizet

offered his old associate twelve thousand, and then asked fifteen thousand of Théodose, with the private reservation of only making over twelve thousand to Claparon. All the aforesaid transactions between these four men were seasoned with the handsomest speeches about sentiment and integrity, about everything that men owed one another who had cast in their lot together. While these submarine labors were in process, to the ultimate advantage of Thuillier, whom Théodose informed of them with manifestations of profound disgust for such swindling, the two friends were together considering the great political work to be published, and the member of the general municipal council was gaining the conviction that he never would come to anything without this man of genius. He was day by day more forcibly impressed with the necessity of making him his son-in-law. And so, in May, Théodose was dining four times a week with his "dear old friend." Théodose was now lord supreme in this family, and that with the approbation of all their friends.

Meanwhile, Félix Phellion was giving young Colleville lessons with praiseworthy regularity and devotion. He sacrificed his time cheerfully, believing that he was working for his future family. In recognition of his pains, and by the advice of Théodose, the young professor was invited to dine on Thursdays at the Collevilles', on which occasions the barrister was never absent. Flavie would stitch a purse, or a pair of slippers, or a cigar case, for the fortunate young man, who would exclaim—"I am more than rewarded, Madame, by being useful to you!"

"We are not rich," Colleville would reply, "but, thunder and lightning! we are not ungrateful!"

Phellion rubbed his hands at hearing his son's accounts

of these dinners, and he already saw his dear, his noble Félix married to Céleste.

However, the fonder Céleste grew of Félix, the more serious and reserved did she become with him, especially as her mother had one day sermonized her on the subject and had said—"Do not encourage young Phellion, my dear daughter. Neither your father nor myself can dispose of your hand. There are your prospects to be considered, and it is much less important to please a penniless schoolmaster than to keep in the affection of Mademoiselle Brigitte and your godfather. If you do not want to kill your mother, my dear—yes, kill me—obey me implicitly in this matter, and remember that, after all, we desire your happiness above everything else."

As the final adjudication was announced for the end of July, toward the end of June Théodose recommended Brigitte to hold herself in readiness, and she therefore sold all her sister-in-law's public securities and her own. The crisis resulting from the treaty of the four great Powers, a signal insult to France, is a historical fact, though it must be recollected that from July until the end of August French bonds, owing to a possibility of war rather too ardently championed by Monsieur Thiers, depreciated by twenty francs, and three per cents fell to sixty. But this was not all. The financial panic had a most disastrous effect upon real property in Paris, and all legal sales brought extremely low prices. This circumstance exalted Théodose to the rank of a prophet and of a great genius in the eyes of Brigitte and Thuillier, to whom the house was finally adjudged for the sum of seventy-five thousand francs. The notary implicated in this political disaster, and whose place and custom were now sold, found himself obliged to go into

the country for a few days; but he kept Claparon's ten thousand francs on his person. On the strength of advice from Théodose, Thuillier came to an agreement with Grindot, who thought he would be doing something for the notary if he finished the house, and as idle workmen abounded during this period of financial depression, the architect was able to finish his pet building at very small cost.

"For twenty-five thousand francs he will gild four rooms!" explained Théodose, who insisted that the bargain should be in writing, and that fifty thousand francs should be substituted for twenty-five thousand. This purchase increased Thuillier's importance tenfold. As for the notary, he had lost his head in the storm of political events, which had burst out like a tornado on a fine summer's day. Sure of his position, relying on the many services rendered, and having a hold upon Thuillier in the work they were writing together, but chiefly because he was admired by Brigitte on account of his secrecy—for he had never made the slightest allusion to his own straitened circumstances, and never talked about money—Théodose was now assuming a rather less servile demeanor than in the past. Brigitte and Thuillier would say to him—"Nothing can rob you of our esteem. You are to feel quite at home here. The opinion of Minard and Phellion, of which you seem to stand in awe, is of no more consequence to us than a line by Victor Hugo. So let them talk, and hold your head up!"

"But we still want them for Thuillier's election to the Chamber," said Théodose. "Follow my advice.—You believe in it, do you not?—When the house is really yours, you will have bought it for nothing, for you can buy three per cents at sixty francs in Madame Thuillier's name, so as to make good the whole of her fortune. Only wait for the

expiration of the term for bidding, and have fifteen thousand francs ready for our thieves."

Brigitte did not tarry; she summoned all her resources into action, with the exception of one hundred and twenty thousand francs.

"We can hold our own with the Minards now!" she exulted.

"We will not sing victory yet," interjected Théodose. "The legal term of expiry still extends over eight days. I have attended to your affairs, but my own are somewhat untidy."

"My dear boy, remember that you have friends!" cried Brigitte, "and that whenever you want twenty-five louis, you can always find them here!"

At this Théodose exchanged a smile with Thuillier, who took him outside, and said—"Excuse my poor sister, she sees the world through the eye of a needle; but if ever you want twenty-five thousand francs I will loan them to you—out of my first rents."

"Thuillier, the rope is around my neck," said Théodose. "Since taking my barrister's degree, I have signed promissory notes—but, not a word!" added Théodose, himself startled at having allowed this secret to escape him. "I am at the mercy of scoundrels—I want to give them a Roland for an Oliver!"

But the disclosure of his secret would serve Théodose in two ways. Thuillier would be put to the test, and a terrible blow might be averted which was threatened by the sinister forces long hovering about him, and conspiring against him. A few words will explain his direful situation.

In the extreme destitution in which he had been living, no one but Cérizet had ever come to see him in the garret

where, for want of clothes, he was lying in bed. He had only one shirt left. For three days he had been living on bread, which he cut sparingly, saying to himself—"What next?" Just at that time his former patron appeared from prison, whence he had been pardoned. It is unnecessary to record the schemes concocted by these two men before the wood fire, one covered with his landlady's counterpane, and the other with his own infamy. The next day, Cérizet, who in the morning had met Dutocq, brought Théodose a pair of trousers, a waistcoat, a coat, a hat, and boots, and took him out to dinner. The Provençal ate half of a meal that cost forty-seven francs. At dessert, between two glasses of wine, Cérizet said to his friend—"Will you sign bills of exchange for me to the amount of fifty thousand francs in your capacity as barrister?"

"You would not make five thousand francs out of it," answered Théodose.

"That is no affair of yours. You will pay the whole amount. It will be our share—the other man's and mine—in transactions by which you have nothing to lose, but in which you figure as a barrister and gain a good clientage, and the hand of a girl worth at least twenty to thirty thousand francs a year. Neither Dutocq nor I can marry her, so we will equip you, feed you, lodge you, put you on your feet in fact. But we must have a guarantee. I am not saying this for myself, as I know you, but for the other gentleman, for whom I shall act, and sign my name. We will equip you like a Corsair, I tell you, to sail after the galleons! If we do not capture that dowry, we shall take another tack. Between ourselves, we need not go to work too delicately in this thing—that's plain enough. We will give you full instructions, as the affair must be carried on with leisure.

There's plenty of pelf in it!—Here, I have some postage stamps."

"Waiter—pen and ink,"' said Théodose.

"You are the sort I like to see!" exclaimed Dutocq.

"Sign, 'Théodose de la Peyrade,' and write 'barrister, Rue Saint-Dominique-d'Enfer, under the words 'accepted for ten thousand francs.' For we shall date it, and prosecute you—quietly of course—so as to have a hold upon you. Shipowners must have some security while the captain and the brig are at sea."

The day after the note matured, the bailiffs of the justice of the peace rendered Cérizet the service of taking secret proceedings. He went to see the barrister at night, and everything was settled without the least publicity. The Commercial Court passes a hundred judgments of that sort at every session. The strict regulations of the Paris barristers' Court of Discipline are well known. This body and the society of attorneys visit derelictions of their members very severely. A barrister sent to the debtor's prison at Clichy would be erased from the roll. Cérizet, upon the advice of Dutocq, had taken the only course against their dummy which could assure them twenty-five thousand each out of Céleste's dowry. Théodose, in signing these deeds, had seen no further than the certainty of daily bread and butter. But as the horizon cleared, and as, through playing his part well, he saw himself rise step by step up the social ladder, he reviewed the possibilities of getting rid of his two associates. And when he asked Thuillier for twenty-five thousand francs, he was hoping to redeem his bills from Cérizet at fifty per cent.

Unfortunately, disgraceful speculations of this kind are not exceptional. Too many of them occur in Paris under

thin disguises to be passed over by a historian giving a faithful and complete picture of society. Dutocq, an accomplished libertine, still owed fifteen thousand francs on account of his legal connection, in which he had bought an interest, and he hoped to lengthen his lease to the end of 1840. Up to now, none of these three worthies had budged or growled; each knew his own strength, and the danger that threatened him. All were equally suspicious, equally observant, equally trustful of the others (in appearance), equally silent or watchful when mutual misgivings were expressed by play of feature or word of mouth. For two months especially, la Peyrade's position had been acquiring the strength of an independent fortress. Dutocq and Cérizet had set their train of powder, and the fuse was always lighted; but the wind might blow it out, or the devil might wet the powder.

When wild beasts are about to take their feed, they always seem the most dangerous, and that moment was approaching for these three hungry tigers. Cérizet would occasionally say to Théodose—in that significant revolutionary tone, which our kings have heard twice in this century—"I have made you King, and I am nothing. Not to be everything is to be nothing."

A grain of envy was increasing to the dimensions of an avalanche in Cérizet. Dutocq expected to find himself at the mercy of his now wealthy copyist. Théodose would have liked to burn his two partners and their documents in two fires. All three studiously concealed their thoughts from each other, so as not to have them guessed. Théodose led a life of treble hell, as he thought of his cards, his game, and his prospects. His confession to Thuillier was a cry of despair; he had plumbed the depth of that middle class

pocket, and had only hauled out twenty-five thousand francs.

"And," said he to himself arriving at his house, "perhaps another month will see the end."

He conceived a violent hatred for the Thuilliers, but he held the old dandy by a harpoon that had caught in his vanity, when he proposed collaboration in a volume entitled "On Taxation and Liquidation."

This is how Claparon and Cérizet had proceeded with the notary two days before the time had expired for bidding on the house. Cérizet, who had been told the password and the notary's whereabout by Claparon, went to him and said—"One of my friend's, Claparon, whom you know, has asked me to come here. He expects you to-morrow at the place appointed; he has the paper you are to receive from him, and he will exchange it with you against the ten thousand francs. But I must be present at the payment of the money, because five thousand francs of it is coming to me, and I warn you, my dear sir, that the name on the counter-deed is left blank."

"I will be there," said the ex-notary.

The poor devil passed a night of horrible anguish, as may be imagined, for his salvation or his ruin was at stake. But the next morning, instead of Claparon, he saw an officer of the law, who, armed with a warrant, summoned him to go to Clichy with him.

Cérizet had come to an understanding with one of the unhappy notary's creditors—having promised to deliver his debtor into his hands in consideration of a part of the amount of the debt. Out of the ten thousand francs intended for Claparon, the victim of this ambush was forced to pay six thousand for his liberty—the amount of his debt.

Receiving his share of this operation, Cérizet said to himself—"Here are a thousand crowns to get rid of Claparon with."

Cérizet went back to the notary and said to him—"Claparon is a scoundrel, sir! He has been paid fifteen thousand francs by the purchaser, who will remain the owner. Threaten him with telling his creditors where he is hiding, and with a suit for fraudulent bankruptcy, and he will give you half the money."

In his anger, the notary wrote a fulminating letter to Claparon. Claparon, in his despair, trembled lest he should be arrested, and Cérizet undertook to procure him a passport.

"You have played me many a trick, Claparon," said Cérizet, "but listen, you shall judge me. All I have in the world is a thousand crowns; I will give them to you! Leave for America at once, and make your fortune there, as I must make mine here."

That evening, Claparon, disguised by Cérizet as an old woman, was on the road to Havre in the public coach. Cérizet now found himself in possession of the fifteen thousand francs demanded by Claparon, and he awaited Théodose in complacency of spirit. This extraordinarily perspicacious individual had a bidder, supposed to be a creditor with a claim of two thousand francs, who was to make a bid, but not soon enough to prevent the sale. This was an idea of Dutocq's, which he was rapidly putting into execution. The pair were going to ask fifteen thousand francs more to buy up this new competitor, so that each would clear seven thousand five hundred. Cérizet wanted this money to settle an affair just like Thuillier's, to which Claparon had called his attention. It concerned a house in

the Rue Geoffroy-Marie, which was to be sold for the sum of six thousand francs. The widow Poiret offered to loan him ten thousand francs, and the wine merchant volunteered to loan a like amount, and to sign promissory notes for ten thousand as well. These thirty thousand francs, together with six thousand of his own, encouraged him to tempt fortune with the more show of reason, as the twenty-five thousand francs to come from Théodose seemed a certainty.

"The time limit for the bid has gone by," said la Peyrade to himself, as he went to ask Dutocq to send for Cérizet. "What if I tried to shake off my leech?"

"This piece of business can only be transacted at Cérizet's, since Claparon is in it," answered Dutocq.

Théodose therefore went to the den of the banker of the poor between seven and eight, whom the clerk of the court had apprised in the morning of the visit of their capitalist.

La Peyrade was received by Cérizet in the horrible kitchen where poverty was sliced up and sorrow was cooked, as we have already seen. They were walking up and down the room, like two wild beasts in a cage, while the following conversation took place between them:

"Have you the fifteen thousand francs?"

"Not here, but I have them at home."

"Why not in your pocket?" asked Cérizet with a snarl.

"I will tell you why," answered the barrister, who had thought out the part he would play on the way to Cérizet's.

"You have put me in a handsome position and I shall never forget it, my friend!" said Théodose with emotion.

"Oh, never mind about that!" said Cérizet.

"Listen—you do not guess what my intentions are?"

"Yes, I do," retorted the usurer.

"No, you don't."

"You do not want to pay up those fifteen thousand—"

Théodose shrugged his shoulders, as he looked fixedly at Cérizet, who, struck by this gesture, looked askance.

"Would you like to be in my place, knowing that a loaded cannon was pointed at you, without wanting to escape? Now listen. You are engaged in a dangerous class of business, and ought to be glad of substantial patronage in the heart of the Paris judiciary. Advancing as I am, I am likely to be deputy public prosecutor in three years, or perhaps advocate general. I herewith offer you my solemn friendship, which will be of the greatest service to you if only to help you to an honorable position later on. Here are my conditions—"

"What? Conditions?" bawled Cérizet.

"In ten minutes I will bring you twenty-five thousand francs for the surrender of all papers you have against me."

"And what about Dutocq? And what about Claparon?" exclaimed Cérizet.

"Leave them in the lurch," whispered Théodose into his friend's ear.

"How delightful," answered Cérizet. "And you are inventing this little trick on the strength of fifteen thousand francs in your pocket which do not belong to you!"

"I am adding ten thousand. However, we know each other—"

"If you are able to get ten thousand francs out of your good people," said Cérizet sharply, "you can ask them for fifteen thousand. Make it thirty, and I am your man! I am as candid as you are, you see."

"What you ask is impossible," cried Théodose. "If at this moment you were dealing with Claparon, your fifteen

thousand francs would be lost, for the house belongs to Thuillier."

"I shall go and tell him," replied Cérizet, pretending to go up to the room which the aforesaid Claparon had left ten minutes before Théodose's arrival in disguise.

The two opponents had of course spoken so as not to be overheard, and as soon as Théodose raised his voice, Cérizet at once warned him by a gesture that Claparon might be listening. The five minutes during which Théodose heard something like the buzz of two voices were horrid torture to him, as his whole existence was at stake. Cérizet came back to his associate with a smile on his lips, his eyes glittering in truly satanic mirth.

"I know nothing about it!" said he, shrugging his shoulders; "but Claparon has friends, he has worked for high-class bankers, and he laughed as he said, 'I thought as much.' You must bring me the twenty-five thousand francs to-morrow, and redeem your bills, my little man."

"Why so?" demanded Théodose, feeling as if an electrical discharge had liquefied his spinal column.

"The house is ours!"

"How is that?"

"Claparon made a bid in the name of a creditor, the first who had entered suit, a little toad by name of Sauvaignou. Desroches is the attorney who has charge of the prosecution, and to-morrow morning you will receive a notice. It is worth our while—Claparon's, Dutocq's and mine—to lay our hands on the funds. What would have become of me without Claparon? I have forgiven him, of course. Yes, I forgive him, and you might not believe me, my dear friend, but I embraced him! You must alter your conditions."

The last word was terrible to hear, particularly as illustrated by Cérizet's grimace.

"Oh, Cérizet!" cried Théodose, "and I meant so well toward you!"

"You see, my dear boy," answered Cérizet, "between you and me, this is what is wanted!" And he smote the region of his heart. "But you have none!" he continued. "As soon as you have us fenced in, you try to squeeze us to death. I rescued you from vermin and the horrors of starvation; you were dying like a fool! We showed you the way to fortune; we gave you the most beautiful social varnish; we put you where there was something to take—and now I know you, and I am on my guard!"

"Is this a declaration of war?" said Théodose.

"You are firing the first shot," said Cérizet.

"If you destroy me, good-by to your hopes, and if you do not, you have me for an enemy!"

"Exactly as I said to Dutocq yesterday," calmly responded Cérizet. "But it is all the same to me! We will choose between the two; we will be guided by circumstances.—I am not a bad sort of fellow," he resumed after a pause. "Bring me your twenty-five thousand francs at nine o'clock to-morrow, and Thuillier shall keep his house. We will continue to serve you at both ends, and you shall pay us. After what has happened, isn't that nice of me, my beauty?"

And Cérizet clapped Théodose on the shoulders with cynicism more cutting than ever was executioner's sword.

"Well, then, give me until noon," answered la Peyrade; "for, as you say, there is money in it!"

"I will try to persuade Claparon; he is in a great hurry, that man is!"

"Well, to-morrow, then," said Théodose, in the tone of a man who seems to have made up his mind.

"Good-evening, friend!" said Cérizet in a nasal voice. "There is a sucking-fish for you!" said he to himself, as he watched Théodose stagger out into the street.

Upon reaching the Rue d'Ecosse, Théodose quickly walked to Madame Colleville's house, inwardly exulting, talking to himself aloud. By the fury of his passion, and the sort of internal fire so well known to Parisians—for in Paris such dreadful situations are many—he reached the degree of frenzy and eloquence which a word will exemplify. Turning down the Rue Deux-Eglises, he cried out—"I will kill him!"

He found Flavie alone.

"What is the matter with you?" she cried.

"I am—" he answered. "Do you love me, Flavie?"

"Oh, how can you doubt it?"

"Do you love me without reserve? Would you if I had committed a crime?"

"Has he killed any one?" she asked herself as she assented with a nod.

Théodose, seizing this straw, went from his chair to Flavie's sofa, torrents of tears streaming from his eyes, accompanied by sobs that would have made a judge weep.

"I am not at home to anybody!" Flavie told her maid. She shut the door, and came back to Théodose, moved to the highest pitch of maternal feeling. The child of Provence lay prostrate, his head thrown back. He was drying his eyes with his handkerchief, which, when Flavie took it from him, was heavy with tears. "But what has happened? What is the matter with you?" she asked.

Nature, more effective than art, was doing Théodose an admirable service. He was no longer playing a part, but was himself, and these tears and this hysterical outburst were but the climax of the previous scenes of this comedy.

"What a child you are," said she in a gentle voice, smoothing Théodose's hair, whose eyes were now dry.

"I have only you in the world!" he exclaimed, kissing Flavie's hands madly; "and if you will remain true to me, if you will be to me what the body is to the soul, and soul to the body," said he, recovering himself, with charming grace—"well, then, I shall take courage!"

Then he got up and walked about.

"Yes, I will fight; I will collect my strength, like Antæus, by embracing my mother! I will throttle with my hands the serpents that are entwining me—those serpents who give me their poisonous kisses, who are trying to suck my blood and my honor! Oh, how wretched it is to be poor! Oh, how great are those who can stand against poverty! I ought to have laid down to die of hunger three and a half years ago! The grave is a sweet bed compared to the life I am leading! These eighteen months have I been stuffing myself with the middle class, and just as I am going to begin a respectable and happy life, and am looking forward to a splendid future; just as I am sitting down to Fortuna's banquet, comes the hangman, and touches me on the shoulder: 'Pay your tithe to the devil, or you die!' And then I am not to crush them! And then I am not to thrust my arm down their throats to their very entrails! Oh, but I will—I will! Look, Flavie, are my eyes dry? Aha! now I am laughing! I feel my strength coming back! Oh, tell me that you love me—tell me so again! It will be like the word of pardon to a criminal."

"You are terrible, my friend!" said Flavie. "You have nearly killed me!"

Although she did not understand him, she collapsed on the sofa, utterly upset by this performance, and then Théodose went down on his knees.

"Forgive me—forgive me!" he cried.

"But tell me what is the matter with you?" she asked.

"There is a plot to ruin me. Only promise me Céleste, and you shall see what a happy life is in store for you! If you hesitate—well, that is as much as telling me that you will be mine yourself, and I will take you now!"

He made such a violent movement toward her that Flavie started up, and began to walk up and down.

"Oh, my angel, here I am at your feet again! What a miracle! Surely God is with me! Something like an illumination has entered my soul! I have had a sudden idea! Thank you, oh, thank you, my good angel! Saint Theodosius, thou hast saved me!"

Flavie admired this chameleon-like creature, who, one knee on the floor, his hands crossed on his breast, and his eyes raised to heaven in a religious trance, was reciting a prayer, and, fervent Catholic that he was, signing himself with the cross. It was as fine as the prayer of Saint Jerome.

"Good-by," said he in a melancholy voice that was charmingly seductive.

"Oh!" cried Flavie, "leave me your handkerchief."

Théodose ran down the steps like a madman, rushed into the street, and went full speed in the direction of the Thuilliers. Turning his head, he saw Flavie at the window, and sent her an ecstatic greeting.

"What a man!" said she to herself.

"My dear friend," said he gently and quietly, almost coaxingly, to Thuillier, "we are in the hands of atrocious villains, but I am going to give them a little lesson."

"What is it all about?" said Brigitte.

"Well, they want twenty-five thousand francs, and in order to reach us legally, the notary or his accomplices have bid above us. Put five thousand francs in your pockets, Thuillier, and come with me; I am going to secure you that house. I am making deadly enemies by it, and they will slay me morally. But if you will remain deaf to their miserable lies, and will never change your opinion of me, that is all I ask; and what, after all, does the whole thing come to? If I win, you will pay one hundred and twenty-five thousand francs instead of one hundred thousand."

"And that would be the end of it, surely?" anxiously asked Brigitte, whose eyes were dilating with suspicion.

"None but registered creditors are entitled to make bids, and as only this one has taken advantage of the privilege, we may feel safe. The claim is only for two thousand francs, but the attorneys must be well paid in affairs of this sort, and the creditor will expect a thousand-franc note."

"Come, Thuillier," said Brigitte, "get your hat and your gloves, and you can get the money. You know where."

"As I have let fifteen thousand francs go by, I do not want any more money to pass through my hands. Let Thuillier pay it himself," said Théodose, when he was alone with Brigitte. "You have made at least thirty thousand francs in the bargain I arranged for you with Grindot. He thought he was benefiting the notary, and now you own a piece of property that in five years will be worth nearly a million. It is on the corner of a boulevard!" Brigitte evinced anxiety as she listened, just like a cat that hears

mice under the floor. She looked into Théodose's eyes, and in spite of the justice of his remarks, doubts began to arise in her mind.

"What is the matter, little aunt?"

"I shall be in a desperate state until we are really the proprietors of—"

"You would certainly give twenty thousand francs, would you not," said Théodose, "to make Thuillier undisputed owner? Well, remember that I have made that amount for you twice over."

"Where are we going?" asked Thuillier.

"To Maitre Godeschal, whom we must engage as our attorney."

"But we refused him when he asked for Céleste!" said the old maid.

"That is just the reason why I am going there," answered Théodose. "I have weighed his character; he is a man of honor, and will think it a fine thing to do you a service."

Godeschal, Derville's successor, had for more than ten years been Desroches' head clerk. Théodose, familiar with this fact, had heard that name whispered into his ear by an inner voice in the midst of his despair, and he conceived the possibility of striking from Claparon's hand the weapon with which Cérizet threatened him. But first the barrister felt it advisable to go to Desroches' office and seek enlightenment upon the situation his opponents were in. Godeschal only, by reason of the intimacy between clerk and master, could inform him. Parisian attorneys, when they are as closely connected as Godeschal and Desroches, live in genuine confraternity, from which results a certain facility of arranging matters that are at all arrangeable.

And la Peyrade, who was a clever man, had worn his lawyer's gown long enough to know how the morals of the judiciary would further his plans.

"Stay in the carriage," said he to Thuillier, as they arrived at the Rue Vivienne, where Godeschal was now principal of the office in which he had served his apprenticeship. "You need only come up if he undertakes the business."

Though it was eleven at night, la Peyrade had not been mistaken, when he reckoned to find a newly fledged attorney at work in his study at that hour.

"What is it that gives me the honor of your visit?" said Godeschal, turning to meet la Peyrade.

"Well," said la Peyrade, "the matter is a serious one, and a delicate question must be resolved between the two of us. Thuillier is below in the carriage, and I do not come as a barrister, but as a friend; you alone are able to render him an immense service, and I told him you had too noble a soul—for are you not the great Derville's successor? —not to place your full capabilities at his disposal. Now, this is the affair."

After explaining (entirely to his own advantage) the piece of rascality which was to be met with skill—since attorneys encounter more mendacious than veracious clients —the barrister summed up his plan of campaign. "You ought, my dear sir, to go this very evening to Desroches, put him on the track, and make a promise to have his client call to-morrow morning—that Sauvaignou. Between the three of us, we will make him confess, and if he wants a thousand-franc note besides his claim, we will let him have it, without counting the fee of five hundred francs for yourself; and the same for Desroches, on condition that

Thuillier obtains a surrender from Sauvaignou to-morrow at ten o'clock."

"I shall go to Desroches at once," said Godeschal.

"No, not before Thuillier has given you the power of attorney and five thousand francs. In these cases the money must be put on the table."

After an interview at which Thuillier was present, la Peyrade carried off Godeschal in a carriage, and took him to the Rue Béthisy, to Desroches', alleging that they went by that route so as to get back to the Rue Saint-Dominique-d'Enfer, and at Desroches' door la Peyrade agreed upon another meeting, to take place the next day at seven o'clock. Théodose's future and fortune hinged upon the success of this meeting, so that we must not be astonished to find him waiving professional usage, when we see him going to Desroches to face Sauvaignou, and to throw himself into the fight, despite the danger he was running by exposing himself to the eye of the most redoubtable attorney in Paris.

As he came in, he first set eyes on Sauvaignou. This Marseillese, as his name seemed to indicate, was a foreman who was an agent between the workman and the master carpenter, to superintend the execution of the work agreed upon. The contractor's profit was the difference between the foreman's price and the builder's, deductions allowed for materials, leaving therefore only the manual labor to be considered. The carpenter having gone into bankruptcy, Sauvaignou had filed a claim as a creditor upon the property at the Commercial Court. This little transaction had hastened the collapse. Sauvaignou, a short, squat man, clad in a gray linen blouse, and wearing a cap on his head, was sitting in an armchair. Three one-thousand franc notes ly-

ing in front of him upon Desroches' desk told la Peyrade plainly enough that the engagement had taken place, and that the attorneys had lost. Godeschal's eyes were eloquent in corroboration hereof, and the look flashed by Desroches upon the advocate of the poor was like the stroke of a pick in a grave. Stimulated by the danger, the Provençal made a splendid effort. He took up the banknotes and folded them, as if to put them away.

"Thuillier has changed his mind," said he to Desroches.

"Oh, well, then, we are agreed," answered the terrible attorney.

"Yes, your client is to bring us fifty thousand francs for expenses on the property, following the bargain between Thuillier and Grindot. I did not tell you that yesterday," said he, turning to Godeschal.

"Do you hear that?" said Desroches to Sauvaignou. "That is matter for a lawsuit that I cannot undertake without a guarantee—"

"But, gentlemen," said the foreman, "I cannot treat with you without seeing the good man who gave me five hundred francs on account for signing the power of attorney."

"Are you from Marseilles?" said la Peyrade to Sauvaignou in *patois*.

"Oh, if he begins to talk *patois*, he is lost," whispered Desroches to Godeschal.

"Yes, Monsieur."

"Well, you poor devil!" Théodose went on; "they want to ruin you. Do you know what you must do? Put those three thousand francs in your pocket, and when the other fellow comes, take your rule and give him a thrashing, and tell him that he is a thief; that he only wanted to use you as

a tool; that you revoke your power of attorney, and that you will pay him his money back when Sunday falls on Saturday. Then, with your three thousand five hundred francs there, and your savings, get off to Marseilles, and if anything should happen to you, come to this gentleman; he will always know where to find me, and I will get you out of your difficulties. For, do you see, I am not only a good Provençal, but one of the first advocates in Paris, and a friend of the poor."

When the foreman found a compatriot as his authority for sanctioning his betrayal of the usurer, he capitulated on the terms of thirty-five hundred francs.

The aforesaid fifteen hundred francs being granted. "A good thrashing," said Sauvaignou, "is just what it is worth, because he might have me put into prison—"

"No, don't strike until he begins to talk nonsense," interrupted la Peyrade, "and then it will be in self-defence."

Upon Desroches' assurance that la Peyrade was a pleading barrister, Sauvaignou signed the surrender, which included a receipt for the costs, interest, and principal of his claim, drawn out in duplicate between Thuillier and himself, each having as witness his own attorney, so that the document might be regular and final.

"We will leave you the fifteen hundred francs," whispered la Peyrade to Desroches and Godeschal; "but on condition of your giving me the surrender. I will have it signed by Thuillier at Cardot's. The poor man has not slept a wink all night."

"Very well," said Desroches. "You may flatter yourself," he added, motioning to Sauvaignou to sign, "at having made fifteen hundred francs so easily."

"They are mine, right enough, mister lawyer?" asked the Provençal uneasily.

"Oh, yes, quite lawfully," answered Desroches. "Only you must sign the withdrawal of your power of attorney this morning, dating it yesterday. Come in this way, please."

Desroches told his head clerk what to do, and told one of his students to see that the bailiff went to Cérizet's before ten o'clock.

"I am greatly obliged to you, Desroches," said la Peyrade, taking the attorney's hand. "You thought of everything, and I shall never forget your service to me."

"Do not deposit your papers with Cardot until after twelve o'clock."

"There is something behind that," said Desroches to Godeschal, as he returned to the study.

"The Thuilliers are getting a magnificent piece of property for nothing," said Godeschal, "that is all."

"La Peyrade and Cérizet remind me of two divers fighting under water. What am I to say to Cérizet, to whom I owe the job?" Desroches asked the barrister.

"That your hand was forced by Sauvaignou," replied la Peyrade.

"You have no fears, then?" said Desroches pointblank to la Peyrade.

"Oh, no; he can learn from me!"

"To-morrow I shall know everything," said Desroches to Godeschal. "No one is more ready to talk than a man who is beaten."

La Peyrade went away with his document under his arm. At eleven o'clock he was standing before the justice of the peace, calm and determined; and as Cérizet arrived, pale with anger and looking daggers, he said into his ear—

"My dear fellow, you see how kind I am, too! I still have twenty-five thousand francs at your disposal in bank-notes for all the papers you have against me."

Cérizet looked at the advocate of the poor, without being able to find a word to answer. He was green; he was swallowing his bile.

"I am undisputed owner!" cried Thuillier, as he returned from Jacquinot's, Cardot's son-in-law and successor. "No power on earth can take my house away from me. They told me so."

"Well, my dear friend," said la Peyrade, returning from the magistrate's hearing at three o'clock, "here you are, enormously rich!" And taking Thuillier into the garden, he began without further ado—"My dear friend, find an excuse to ask your sister for ten thousand francs, in such a way that she may never suspect that they are for me. Tell her the amount is wanted to facilitate your nomination as a member of the Legion of Honor, and that you know how the money will be expended."

"Yes, that's it," said Thuillier. "Besides, I can pay her back out of the rents."

"Have the money ready this evening. I am going out to see about your Cross, and to-morrow we shall know more particulars."

"What a man you are," exclaimed Thuillier.

"The ministry of the first of March is going to fall; so we ought to get that much out of it," remarked Théodose astutely.

The barrister hastened to Madame Colleville, and said to her, as he entered the room—"I have won! We shall have for Céleste property worth a million, whose reversion will be settled upon her by Thuillier! But let us keep this secret,

for your daughter's hand will be asked by peers of France. Besides, I am benefited by it also. Now dress, and let us go to the Comtesse de Bruel's, who can get Thuillier the Cross. While you are putting your armor on, I will pay court for a moment to Céleste, and we will talk on the way."

La Peyrade noticed Céleste and Félix Phellion in the drawing-room. Flavie had so much confidence in her daughter that she had left her alone with the young professor. Since his great triumph that morning, Théodose felt as though it were time to begin his suit to Céleste. The moment for instigating a quarrel between the lovers had arrived. He therefore did not hesitate to glue his ear to the door of the drawing-room before going in, to find out what letter of the alphabet of love they were at, and he was induced to this domestic crime through concluding from their loud voices that they were in dispute. Love, according to one of our poets, is a privilege that two people give each other of reciprocal worrying about nothing.

"Monsieur Phellion," Céleste was saying, interrupting him tartly, "enough of this subject!"

It was at this that Théodose thought fit to enter the room, and he found Céleste pale, and the schoolmaster as nervous as a lover usually is who has been irritating his sweetheart.

"I heard the word *enough!* Does that mean that there was too much?" he inquired, looking from Céleste to Félix and from Félix to Céleste.

"We were talking about religion," answered Félix, "and I was telling Mademoiselle how fatal priestly influence is to the peace of the home—"

"No, that is not the point, Monsieur," said Céleste an-

grily, "but it is a question whether husband and wife can be united in heart and soul when one is an atheist and the other a Catholic!"

"Are there such people as atheists?" exclaimed Théodose, pretending great astonishment. "You ask whether a Catholic may marry a Protestant? Why, no salvation is possible for a married couple except they are in perfect harmony in their religious opinions! As for me, I am a son of the Church, and I would undertake nothing important without prayer, according to the good old custom. I do not flaunt my religion. In the Revolution of 1789 an event happened in my family which attached us more than ever to our Holy Mother Church. A poor Demoiselle de la Peyrade of the elder branch, six years before the Revolution, married a lawyer, who, following the fashion of the time, was a Voltairean, that is to say a sceptic—or a deist, if you like. He gave himself up to revolutionary theories and the delicacies of the religion of Reason, which you know of. He came back to our country imbued with the fanaticism of the Convention. His wife was very handsome; he forced her to play the part of Liberty. The poor creature went mad—she died mad! Well, as things are going now, we may look forward to another 1793."

This narration, which he made up as he went along, made such an impression upon Céleste's young and innocent imagination that she got up, bowed to the two young men, and went to her room.

"Ah, Monsieur, what have you been saying?" cried Félix, wounded to the soul by the cold look that Céleste had cast him. "She already fancies herself turned into the Goddess of Reason!"

"What was it all about?" asked Théodose.

"About my indifference to religion."

"The great evil of the century," answered Théodose with unction.

"Here I am," said Madame Colleville, who now appeared dressed up in good taste. "But what is the matter with my poor little girl? She is crying!"

"Crying?" exclaimed Félix. "Tell her, Madame, that I will read the 'Imitation of Christ' at once."

And Félix went down to the street with Théodose and Flavie, whose arm the barrister squeezed, to make her understand that he would explain the young man's fit of madness in the carriage.

An hour after, Madame Colleville and Céleste, and Colleville and Théodose, arrived at the Thuilliers' for dinner. Théodose and Flavie had taken Thuillier into the garden, and Théodose had said to him—"My dear friend, the Cross will be yours in a week. Our little friend here will tell you of our visit to the Countess de Bruel."

Here Théodose left Thuillier, at perceiving Desroches in the company of Mademoiselle Thuillier. He went toward the attorney, impelled by a horribly chilling presentiment.

"My dear maitre," whispered Desroches to Théodose, "I have come to see if you can furnish twenty-five thousand francs, plus two thousand six hundred and eighty francs and sixty centimes for costs."

"You are Cérizet's attorney!" cried the barrister.

"He has handed the papers over to Louchard, and you know what awaits you after arrest. Is Cérizet wrong in believing you have twenty-five thousand francs in your desk? You offered him that amount, and naturally he does not want to leave it in your possession."

"Thank you, Maitre Desroches, I foresaw this attempt."

"Between ourselves," answered the attorney, "you have fooled him beautifully. The rascal will shrink from nothing to get revenge, and if you will let your lawyer's gown go to the devil, and submit to imprisonment, he will lose everything!"

"I!" cried Théodose; "I am going to pay! But there are still five acceptances of five thousand francs each. What does he propose to do with them?"

"After this morning's affair, I can tell you nothing more. But my client is a very sly dog, and certainly has his little schemes."

"Now, see here, Desroches, are those papers still at your office?"

"Are you going to pay?"

"Yes, in three hours."

"Very well, be at my place at nine o'clock, when I will take the money from you and remit you the drafts. Only understand that at half-past nine they would be at Louchard's."

"Very well, then, this evening at nine," said Théodose.

"At nine," repeated Desroches, with a single glance taking in the whole family then assembled in the garden. Céleste, with red eyes, was talking with her godmother. Colleville, Brigitte, Flavie, and Thuillier were on the steps leading to the garden from the hall. Said Desroches to Théodose who had escorted him hither on the way out—"You can redeem your bills of exchange easily enough."

By that one glance Desroches had learned the barrister's tremendous power.

At daybreak next morning, Théodose went to the short-loan usurer to see what effect the punctual liquidation of the night before had had upon his enemy, and to begin

other tactics to get rid of this horsefly. Cérizet was already up, and engaged in conversation with a woman.

"But, my dear Mamma Cardinal—"

"Yes, my dear gentleman—"

"What is it you want?"

"You must make up your mind—"

Nothing but such fragments of an animated talk, passed in undertones from mouth to ear and from ear to mouth, were overheard by the mute witness, who fixed his attention upon Madame Cardinal. She was one of Cérizet's first customers and sold fish at second-hand. Parisians may be aware of such strange creatures flourishing on their soil, but strangers have no notion of their existence, and Mother Cardinal, technically speaking, deserved all the interest she excited in the barrister. So many women of this kind are to be seen in the streets that they are no more noticed than three thousand pictures in a gallery. But the Cardinal woman had all the merits of a great masterpiece, as she was a perfect type of her species.

"And do you want me to sleep on straw?" said she to Cérizet.

"What do I care for the Toupilliers? Am I not a Toupillier? Where do you want me to put them—these Toupilliers?"

This vicious sally was stopped by Cérizet with an emphatic and prolonged "Hush!"

"Well, then, go and see about it, and then come back," said Cérizet, pushing the woman to the door, with a parting whisper.

"So, my dear friend," said Théodose to Cérizet, "you have got your money?"

"Yes," answered Cérizet, "we matched our claws. They

are equally tough, equally long, equally strong—and now what next?"

"Am I to tell Dutocq that you received twenty-five thousand francs yesterday?"

"Oh, my dear friend, not a word, if you love me!"

"Listen," resumed Théodose, "I want to know once for all what you are going to do. I have positively decided not to stay another twenty-four hours on this gridiron. If you cheat Dutocq, it makes no difference to me, but I want to come to an understanding with you. Twenty-five thousand francs will make your fortune, for you must have made ten thousand in your business, and you will have enough to begin as an honest man. If you will let me alone, and if you will not prevent me from becoming Mademoiselle Colleville's husband, I shall rise to be public prosecutor, or something of the kind, and you could do no better than to secure such patronage."

"Here are my conditions," said Cérizet, "and they do not admit of discussion. You can take them or leave them. You will see that I get the Thuillier house as chief tenant—with power to sublet—on a lease of eighteen years, and I will then give you back one of the five bills of exchange cancelled. You will find me in your path no longer. You must deal with Dutocq as regards the other four. It is your own fault; but Dutocq is no match for you."

"I consent to that if you will pay a rent of forty-eight thousand francs, first year in advance, and begin the lease from next October."

"Yes, but I will only pay forty-three thousand in cash. Your note will make up the forty-eight. I have looked at the house, and the bargain suits me."

"One more condition," said Théodose: "will you help me against Dutocq?"

"No," answered Cérizet, "you have cooked him enough without my running a spit through him. Be reasonable. The poor man does not know where to turn for the last fifteen thousand francs to pay for his place in the lawyers' firm, and it is surely enough for you to know that with fifteen thousand francs you can buy back your notes."

"Well, then, give me a fortnight to get your lease ready."

"Not later than next Monday. On Tuesday your five thousand franc bill will be in Louchard's hands, unless you have paid on Monday, or Thuillier has awarded me the lease."

"Very well, then, let it be Monday!" said Théodose. "Are we friends again?"

"We shall be on Monday," answered Cérizet.

"Very well, on Monday you will invite me to dinner," said Théodose laughing.

"At the Rocher de Cancale—if I have the lease. Dutocq will join us, and we shall enjoy ourselves. I have had no amusement for a long time."

Théodose and Cérizet then parted.

The business of chief tenant, Cérizet knew to be very profitable. He had investigated the chances which a lease of Thuillier's *stolen* house (as he described it to Desroches) would afford, and had calculated that it might be sublet for more than sixty thousand francs, in six years' time. It contained four shops, two fronting on each side, as it stood on the corner of a boulevard. He hoped to make at least ten thousand francs for twelve years, and so for the present gave up the purchase of a house in the Rue Geoffroy-Marie, to which allusion has previously been made. But an unex-

pected awakening was in store for him. He found Fortune standing at his pillow, pouring affluence over him from her golden horn, in the person of Madame Cardinal. He had always treated this woman with special consideration, and for a year had been promising her enough money to buy a donkey and a little cart, so that she might do her business on a large scale, and go as far as the suburbs. Madame Cardinal, the widow of a market porter, had an only daughter, whose beauty had been praised to Cérizet by some of his other customers. Olympe Cardinal was about thirteen years of age when Cérizet began to loan money in his district, and with the ulterior objects of a libertine he showered attentions on the woman Cardinal. He had rescued her from utter destitution, hoping to get Olympe for his mistress, but in 1838 the girl had left her mother, and was no doubt *making a living*—to use an expression by which the common people of Paris denote the sacrifice of the most precious gifts of nature and of youth.

To look for a girl in Paris is like fishing for a member of the white-bait tribe in the Seine. You must trust to your net and to luck—propitious in this case to Mother Cardinal. She had one day taken a friend to the Gobino Theatre, and there had recognized the leading lady to be her daughter, whom the first comedian had had in his power for three years. The old woman, at first delighted to see her offspring in a gorgeous dress, her hair done like a Duchess's, wearing fine-worked stockings and satin slippers, and her entrance applauded, had finally shouted at her from her seat—"You shall hear of me again, your mother's murderer! We will see if good-for-nothing play-actors have the right to seduce girls of sixteen!"

She lay in wait for her daughter at the stage door, but

the leading lady and the first comedian had no doubt climbed over the footlights, and gone out with the public, instead of by the back door, where the widow Cardinal and her good friend, Mother Mahoudeau, created a furious disturbance, which two municipal guards allayed. These august functionaries, before whom the two women lowered the pitch of their vociferation, stated to the mother that her daughter was of legal age to join a theatre, and that, instead of squealing at the door for the manager, she could summon him before the justice of the peace, or the police court, at her choice. The next day, Madame Cardinal decided upon consulting Cérizet, knowing he was employed in the magistrate's office. But before repairing to her den in the Rue des Poules, her uncle Toupillier's house porter had startled her with the news that the old man was at his last extremity, having but two days to live.

"But what can I do?" the widow Cardinal had asked.

"We will count on you, my dear Madame Cardinal, to do something for us for the good advice we are giving you. This is what has happened. For some time your poor uncle has not been able to stir, and is sending me to collect the rents of his house in the Rue Nôtre-Dame de Nazareth, and also the arrears of dividends on treasury bonds worth eighteen hundred francs."

At this Madame Cardinal's eyes, which had been wandering, suddenly became fixed.

"Yes, my little lady," the worthy Perrache, the little hunchback porter, had resumed, "and seeing that you were the only person who ever thought of him and went to see him, and brought him some fish occasionally, perhaps he might leave you something in his will. My wife has been taking care of him these last days. She spoke to him about

you, but he did not want you to be told that he was ill, but now you see it is time to show your nose. Why, it is fully two months now that he has not been going to business!"

"You know very well, old leather-scraper," the woman Cardinal had replied to the porter (a shoemaker by trade), as they rapidly walked toward her uncle's, "that hair might have grown inside my hands sooner than I would have guessed that! What? My uncle Toupillier rich? The pious beggar of the Saint Sulpice?"

"Oh," the porter had said, "he was doing very well. He took his sweetheart to bed with him every night—a fat bottle of Roussillon wine. My wife tasted it, though he used to tell us that it only cost six sous a bottle."

"Never mind about all that, my good man," Madame Cardinal had said, as she left the porter. "I will remember you—if there is anything."

This Toupillier, once a drum-major in the French Guard, had in 1787 gone into the service of the Church, when he became beadle of Saint Sulpice. The Revolution had stripped him of his office, and he had fallen into utter destitution. He had then been obliged to take up the profession of artist's model, which his fine build enabled him to do. When the government removed the restrictions upon Church services, he resumed his beadle's halberd, but in 1816 was again expelled, partly because of immoral conduct, and partly by reason of his political opinions. He was supposed to be a Bonapartist. However, by way of a pension, he was allowed to take his stand at the door, and to proffer holy water. After this, a troublesome incident, to which we shall soon have occasion to refer again, caused the loss of his sprinkler. But he still contrived to maintain his connection with the Church by getting permission to beg in

the porch. He was now seventy-two years old, called himself ninety-six, and began the centenarian paupers' trade.

In the whole of Paris there was no such beard to be seen, and no such hair, as Toupillier's. He walked almost doubled up, leaning on his stick with a trembling hand, a hand covered with the lichen that grows on stone, and he held out the classic, greasy, patched-up, broad-brimmed hat, into which alms fell in plenty. His legs, wrapped about with linen rags, dragged along in dilapidated hemp shoes, supplied inside with substantial horsehair soles. He doctored his face with pigments, to imitate marks of disease and old age. He was king of the beggars, and lord of all he surveyed, and all who came to beg within the sacred precincts paid him a sort of tax. When a mourner, a bridegroom, or a godfather, came out from Church saying, "Here is something for all of you, and now leave me alone," Toupillier, as the beadle's successor, pocketed three-quarters of the donation, and gave only one-quarter to his acolytes, whose tribute money amounted to one sou a day. Money and liquor were his two last predilections, but he regulated his habits of drink and devoted himself entirely to gathering wealth, without neglecting his health, however. He would drink at night after dinner when the Church was shut. Twenty years he went to sleep embracing his bottle—his last mistress. In the morning he was to be found at his post, with all his artistic stock-in-trade. Until dinner time he gnawed ostentatiously at bread crusts, as if they were his only food. He did this with a humble resignation that brought him many a penny. The beadle and the holy water man, with whom he probably had an understanding, used to say of him—"That is our Church beggar. He knew the

Curé Languet who built Saint Sulpice. He was beadle for twenty years before the Revolution and after. He is a hundred years old."

This little chapter of biography, known to all the church-going dames of the parish, was the best of advertisements, and no hat in all Paris was better filled. He had bought his house in 1826, and his government securities in 1830. To judge by the value of each, his income must have been six thousand francs a year, and he no doubt had made his money by usury, like Cérizet, since the price of the house was forty thousand francs, and he had forty-eight thousand in bonds. The niece, completely deceived by her uncle—as also were the porter, the petty Church officials, and the congregation—thought him poorer than herself, and when she had some fish in the first stages of decay she used to take them to the poor old man. She therefore thought herself justified in seeking reward for her liberality and sympathy toward an uncle who very likely had a host of relatives, herself being the third and last of the Toupillier daughters. She had four brothers, and her father, a truck vender, had in her childhood mentioned three aunts and four uncles, all very badly bestowed with worldly goods. After seeing the sick man, she had galloped off to consult Cérizet, to tell him that she had found her daughter again, and to impart to him her reasons for believing that her uncle Toupillier had quantities of gold hidden in his bed. Madame Cardinal felt herself unequal to the task of getting her hands upon this legacy, either with or without the law, and so she went to confide in Cérizet.

"My Benjamin," said the second-hand fish dealer, addressing Cérizet with a countenance inflamed as much by cupidity as by her rapid walk, "my uncle is lying on more

than a hundred thousand francs in gold, and I am sure that the Perraches, on the pretence of nursing him, have made a hole in the money bag."

"Divided among forty heirs," said Cérizet, "that would not be much for any one. Listen, Madame Cardinal! I will marry your daughter. Give her your uncle's gold, and I will let you take the interest on the bonds and the rents from the house for your lifetime."

"Do we run no risk?"

"None."

"Done with you, then!" said Madame the widow, clasping her future son-in-law's hand. "Six thousand francs a year! What a glorious life!"

"And a son-in-law like myself!" added Cérizet.

"I shall be a real lady!" screeched old Cardinal.

"Now," resumed Cérizet, after an embrace with his mother-in-law, "I must go and examine the ground. Do you stick to the place! You must tell the porter that you are expecting the doctor. The doctor will be myself, and you must not recognize me."

"You're a sly one, you great rascal!" said Madame Cardinal, slapping Cérizet on the stomach by way of saying good-by.

An hour after, Cérizet, dressed all in black, and disguised by a red wig and skilfully made-up face, arrived in the Rue Honoré-Chevalier in a hired cabriolet. He asked the shoemaking porter to show him where a poor old man called Toupillier lived.

"Is Monsieur," said the porter, "the doctor whom Madame Cardinal is expecting?"

Cérizet had no doubt rehearsed his difficult part in his mind, for he avoided answering.

"Is it here?" he asked, making his way at hazard toward one of the sides of the courtyard.

"No, Monsieur," answered Perrache, who took him to the back stairs leading to the garret which the pauper occupied.

The resource remained to the inquisitive porter of questioning the coachman, and we will leave him engaged in that pursuit.

With the assistance of the rope which served as a banister, Cérizet climbed the ladder to the room where the centenarian lay dying, and where the hideous drama of acted poverty awaited his sight. In Paris, everything that is done by design is a success. In this paupers excel, just as the shopkeepers do in their display windows, and just as the rascals do who borrow money on false pretences. The floor had never been swept; the planks were invisible under a litter of refuse, dust, caked mud, and any trash that Toupillier might fling down. A tumble-down, cast-iron stove, whose pipe was bricked into a condemned chimney, was the most conspicuous ornament of this hovel. At the bottom of a recess was a rickety bed, with green serge curtains, eaten by worms until they presented the semblance of lace. The window was darkened by a greasy deposit on the panes, which supplied the place of blinds. The white-washed walls were blackened with the smoke of coal and turf from the stove. On the chimney-piece were a chipped water jug, two bottles, and a cracked plate. An old worm-eaten chest of drawers contained some linen and clean clothes. The furniture consisted in a night-table of the coarsest description—a table worth forty sous—and two kitchen chairs, almost denuded of straw. The centenarian's picturesque costume was hanging on a nail; beneath it the

hemp shoes that were his usual footgear; his magic staff and his hat made a sort of panoply of poverty.

As Cérizet entered the room, he cast a rapid and inclusive glance at the old man. His head was lying on a pillow black with dirt, and without a cover, and his angular profile stood out dark against the green curtains. Toupillier, a man of nearly six feet in height, was staring at an imaginary object at the foot of his bed. He had not stirred when the heavy door creaked, which was sheeted with iron and provided with strong bolts, for the safe protection of his domicile.

"Is he conscious?" said Cérizet, before whom Madame Cardinal recoiled, recognizing him only by his voice.

"Yes, very nearly."

"Then come out on the landing, where he cannot hear us. This is how we will go about it," he went on, speaking into his future mother-in-law's ear. "He is weak, but he does not look bad, and I think we may count on another week. I am going for a doctor who will do what we want. I shall come back this evening with six poppy heads. In his present state, you see, a brew of that kind would put him into a deep sleep. I shall also send you a truckle bed, on the pretext of giving you a couch to spend the night upon in his room. While he is asleep, we will move him from his own bed to the other, and when we have found the money in that precious piece of furniture—well, then, we will find a way of carrying it off. The doctor will tell us whether he is likely to live a few more days, and able to make a will."

"My dear son!"

"But we must know who the inhabitants of this shanty are. The Perraches might sound the alarm, and so many lodgers mean so many spies."

"I know this," answered Madame Cardinal, "that Monsieur du Portail, the little old tenant on the first floor, is taking care of a maniac whom an old Flemish woman by name of Katt has been calling Lydie all day. The only servant is another old man, called Bruno, who does everything except the cooking."

"But what about that binder and that stitcher?" objected Cérizet. "They are at it from early morning. However, we must see," he added, like a man who has not yet fixed upon a definite plan of action. "In any case, I will go to the municipal office in your district, to see about Olympe's birth certificate and the publication of the banns. Next Saturday week is the wedding!"

"How you do go it! How you do go it, you old scamp!" ejaculated Mother Cardinal, playfully giving her redoubtable son-in-law a push with her shoulder.

On his way out, Cérizet was surprised to see the little old man, du Portail, walking in the garden with one of the most important members of the government, Martial de la Roche-Hugon. He lingered about the courtyard, scrutinizing the old house built under Louis XIV., whose browned stone walls were as decrepit as Toupillier. He looked into the two workshops and counted the workmen. The house was as silent as a cloister. Seeing himself observed, Cérizet went away, revolving in his mind all the difficulties involved in the abstraction of the hidden treasure, though the bulk might be small. "Take that away during the night," he mumbled, "when the porters are on the alert, or in the daytime, when one would meet twenty people—? Twenty-five thousand francs will make an awkward bundle to carry—"

"Well, sir," said the porter's wife, coming out to meet Cérizet, "how is he doing, that good old man?"

"I am not a doctor," answered Cérizet, who had no taste for the part; "I am Madame Cardinal's business agent. I have just advised her to get another bed, so as to be near her uncle day and night, although it would perhaps be best to engage a sick-nurse."

"I can easily attend to that; I have nursed women in child-bed."

"Well, we will see about it; but who is the lodger on the first floor?"

"Monsieur du Portail. He has lived here for thirty years. He is a gentleman of leisure, Monsieur; a very respectable old gentleman. Yes, he lives on his money. He was once in business. For nearly eleven years he has been trying to give her senses back to a daughter of one of his friends, Mademoiselle Lydie de la Peyrade; she is being well looked after, you may be sure, and only this morning two famous doctors were in to see her. But they have not been able to cure her up to now; she requires very close attention, as sometimes she gets up in the night—"

"Mademoiselle Lydie de la Peyrade!" shouted Cérizet. "Are you quite sure of the name?"

"Madame Katt, her companion, who also does the little cooking there is, has told me her name a thousand times, although generally neither Monsieur Bruno nor Madame Katt ever talk. It is as difficult to get any information out of them as it would be from a stone wall. For twenty years that we have been porters here we have never heard anything about Monsieur du Portail. More than that, Monsieur, he owns that little house next door. You see that house door? Well, he can go out as he pleases, and let people in that way as he pleases, without our knowledge. The landlord knows no more about him than we do. If

any one rings at the house door, Monsieur Bruno goes to open it."

"So then," said Cérizet, "you did not see the gentleman come in with whom the old fox is talking now?"

"No, surely not!"

"It is Théodose's uncle's daughter," said Cérizet to himself, as he got into the cabriolet. "Should du Portail be the unknown friend who sent my young gentleman twenty-five hundred francs once upon a time? What if I write the old man an anonymous letter, warning him of the dangers the barrister is threatened with, on account of bills of exchange worth twenty-five thousand francs?"

An hour after, a truckle-bed, with all fittings complete, arrived for Madame Cardinal, to whom the inquisitive porter's wife offered her services to get food for the invalid.

"Do you want to see the priest?" said Madame Cardinal to her uncle. She observed that the arrival of the bed had aroused him from his lethargy.

"I want wine!" answered the pauper.

"How do you feel, Father Toupillier?" asked Madame Perrache, in her most caressing tones.

"I want wine, I tell you!" repeated the old fellow, with more vigor than his enfeebled condition would have allowed one to expect.

"How do we know if it's good for you, uncle?" said his niece coaxingly. "We ought to hear what the doctor says first."

"Doctors? I won't have any!" shouted Toupillier. "And you—what are you doing here? I want nobody!"

"Uncle, dear, I came to see if you wanted anything. I have some nice fresh sole. How about a pretty little sole, now, with a slice of lemon?"

"Fine fish yours is—rotten stuff! The last you brought me, over six weeks ago, is still in the cupboard. You may take it back."

"Goodness! How ungrateful these invalids are!" remarked Madame Cardinal aside to the lady Perrache. At the same time, to show her solicitude for the patient, she smoothed out his pillow, saying: "There, uncle! That is better now, isn't it?"

"Go to the devil!" bellowed Toupillier, enraged. "I want to be left alone! Get me some wine, and shut up your jaw!"

"Don't be cross, uncle; we'll get you the wine."

Cérizet, returning to Toupillier's, to impart further instructions to the niece, met her with a basket under her arm.

"Well," said the usurer, "is this how you stick to your post?"

"I had to go out for wine," answered the Cardinal woman. "He is bawling like a madman about being left alone, and about taking his dose. He thinks Rousillon is the best thing in the world for his illness; he shall have a bellyful! Perhaps when he is full, he will keep quiet."

"Right you are," said Cérizet sententiously. "Invalids must never be contradicted. But this wine, you understand, must be improved by putting in this," and he raised the lid of the basket and slipped in some poppy-heads. "You will give the poor old man the benefit of at least five or six hours' sound sleep. In the evening I shall come back to see you, and I think there will be no further obstacle to our examining the particulars of the legacy."

"That's it!" said Madame Cardinal, with a confirming wink of the eye.

"This evening, then," and the usurer broke off the conversation.

He felt that he was embarking on a difficult and disreputable enterprise, and had no special desire to be seen in the street talking with his accomplice.

When she went back to the beggar's garret, his niece found him still plunged in the same lethargy. She sent Madame Perrache away, and went to the door, to take in a bundle of firewood, which she had ordered in a neighboring street. Into an earthenware pot, with which she had provided herself, and which fitted the hole in the top of the stove where poor people cook their food, she threw the poppy-heads, drowning them in two-thirds of the bottle of wine she had bought. She then lit a big fire under the vessel so as to have the concoction ready as soon as possible. The crackling of the wood and the heat of the room did not fail to awaken Toupillier from his state of torpor. Seeing the stove lighted, he cried out—"What, a fire here? Do you want to burn the house down?"

"But, uncle dear, that is wood I bought out of my own money to warm your wine. The doctor says you must not drink it cold."

"Where is the wine?" then asked "uncle dear," somewhat pacified by the assurance that these culinary operations were not being conducted at his expense.

"We must wait for the water to boil," answered his nurse; "the doctor said so. But if you will be good, I will give you half a glass cold to soothe your stomach. I am taking that much upon myself—you must say nothing about it."

"I want no doctors. They are a set of criminals who try to kill every one!" cried Toupillier, reanimated by the idea

of drink. "Well—and that wine?" with the expression of a person whose patience is exhausted.

Convinced that if this indulgence would do him no harm, it would also do him no good, the Cardinal woman filled a glass half full, and, while presenting it with one hand to the sick man, with the other she supported him so that he might sit up and drink it.

With his skinny and eager fingers, Toupillier seized the glass, and after having emptied its contents at a single draught, he complained—"Four drops altogether, and water in it at that!"

"Hush, uncle, you must not say that. I bought it myself at Father Legreleu's, and I am giving it to you pure, but let me mix the rest. Doctor said you might drink your fill of it."

Toupillier resigned himself with a shrug of the shoulders, and in a quarter of an hour, the nostrum being ready, Madame Cardinal without further discussion brought him a cup full to the brim. With such avidity did the centenarian swallow the potion, that he did not at once perceive that the wine was drugged. But at the last gulp, he became aware of a peculiar, nauseating flavor, and flung the cup on his bed, wailing that an attempt had been made to poison him.

"Indeed? This is the kind of poison you have been given," answered the fishmonger, as she let the dregs in the cup dribble into her mouth. She then maintained that if the wine had not its usual taste, it was because his tongue was foul.

The sequel to this debate, which continued for some time, was that the drug began to take effect, and when an hour had elapsed the patient was sound asleep. While she was waiting for Cérizet, in enforced leisure, Madame Cardi-

nal was seized with an idea: she thought that to faciliate the goings and comings necessary for the removal of the treasure, it might be well to dampen the Perraches' vigilance. Consequently, after taking the precaution of throwing the poppy-heads away, she called the porter's wife, and said to her —"Mother Perrache, do come and taste his wine! You would have rather thought he was ready to make away with a whole cask, and here, after the first cup, he wants no more!"

"To your health," said the porter's wife, clinking her glass against Madame Cardinal's, who was wise enough to take her own portion from the unadulterated fluid in the bottle. Less versed in the knowledge of liquors than Toupillier, Madame Perrache detected no flavor in the insidious beverage, now cold, to make her suspect its soporific qualities. On the contrary, she declared it was like velvet, and only regretted that her husband was not there to get a share. After a prolonged gossip, the two old women parted; then, with some meat she had purchased, and the remainder of the Rousillon, Madame Cardinal spread herself a repast, which she crowned with a nap. Without taking the excitement of the day into consideration, the fumes of one of the most intoxicating wines in the world would have sufficiently explained the depth and duration of her slumbers. When she awoke, twilight was setting in.

Her first thought was to look at the patient's bed. His sleep was uneasy, and he was talking in his dreams.

"The diamonds," said he, "the diamonds! After my death, not before!"

"Well," said Madame Cardinal, "diamonds, too? Who would have thought it?"

And seeing that Toupillier was apparently in the throes

of a violent nightmare, instead of soothing his agitations by changing his position, she concentrated her attention upon the words he was uttering, hoping to derive some important revelation from them.

Just then, a sharp knock at the door, from which the excellent nurse had been wise enough to withdraw the key, announced Cérizet's arrival.

"Well?" said he, entering.

"Well, he took the dose. He has been sleeping like an angel four whole hours; he was speaking about diamonds just now in his dreams."

"Oh," said Cérizet, "it would not surprise me if we found some. These paupers, when they take it into their heads to get rich, collect all sorts of things."

"But, my little man, what was your idea in telling Mother Perrache you were my business agent, and that you had nothing to do with the medical trade? We agreed this morning you were to come as a doctor."

Cérizet did not want to acknowledge that the assumption of the title of doctor had frightened him, for his accomplice must not be discouraged.

"I saw that the woman was attempting to get a free consultation, and I got rid of her in that way."

"Ah," said Madame Cardinal, "great minds have the same thoughts, and it was my trick, too, to show her the thing in the same light. To see a business agent come, seemed to put ideas into her head. Did they see you come in, those Perraches?"

"The woman seemed to be asleep in her armchair."

"Of course she was asleep," said Madame Cardinal significantly.

"What, really?" asked Cérizet.

"Decidedly!" said the fish dealer. "When there is enough for one, there is enough for two; I gave her the rest of the medicine."

"As for the husband," Cérizet went on, "he is there; for as he pulled the door rope, he gave me a gracious nod of recognition which I would have been pleased to dispense with."

"Let us wait until it is quite dark, and we will fool him grandly."

In effect, a quarter of an hour later, with an amount of spirit that surprised even the usurer, the woman enacted a comedy, for the benefit of the stupid porter, pretending to walk to the door with a gentleman who had declined the civility, and whom she was killing with kindness. Feigning to escort the imaginary doctor to the street door, she complained that the wind had blown out her candle, and, on the pretext of lighting it at Madame Perrache's, extinguished that lady's. All this fuss, accompanied with a variety of vociferations, and with a bewildering flow of language, was so artfully managed, that had she been called before a magistrate, the porter's wife would have testified on oath that she had let out the doctor between nine and ten in the evening. When the two conspirators were in undisturbed possession of the field, the woman hung up her shawl before the window to act as a curtain.

In the Luxembourg quarter traffic stops at an early hour, and a little before ten all sounds in the house, as well as those without, had nearly ceased. A neighbor engrossed in the reading of a serial novel alone held the confederates in check for some time, but no sooner had he put the extinguisher on his candle, than Cérizet said it was time to set to work. By going about the job at once, there was the better

probability of the sleeper remaining under the influence of the drug, and if the discovery of the treasure did not consume too much valuable time, Madame Cardinal might have the house door opened, to let her out on the pretext of going to the chemist's for some medicine demanded by a crisis in the patient's condition. Reckoning upon the habits of porters disturbed in their first sleep, Cérizet hoped the Perraches would pull the door rope without getting up. He would thus been enabled to slip out at the same time, and between them they could convey part of the money to a safe place that night. As for spiriting away the rest, it would be easy to invent a plan the next day. Sublime in counsel, Cérizet was but an indifferent man of action, and without the woman's robust arms he could never have lifted from the bed what might be called the ex-drum major's corpse. In dead sleep, and absolutely unconscious, Toupillier was an inert mass, which fortunately could be handled without elaborate care. Doubly strong under the incentive of cupidity, the athletic Cardinal, in spite of her business agent's inefficient aid, succeeded in operating the transportation of her uncle without mishap, and at last the bed was open to their search.

At first they found nothing, and the fish dealer, pressed to explain how she had that morning persuaded herself that her uncle was lying on a hundred thousand francs in gold, was obliged to own that the conversation with the Perraches and her own active imagination approximately formed the foundation of her knowledge. Cérizet was furious. After all day cherishing the idea and the hope of fortune, after deciding to embark upon a hazardous and compromising undertaking, he found himself face to face with Zero! The disappointment was so cruel, that if he had not been afraid

to match his muscular strength with his mother-in-law's, he would have indulged in physical extremities against her. The least he could do was to vent his anger in words. Severely scolded, Madame Cardinal contented herself with replying that all hope was not lost, and, with a face that would have moved mountains, continued to ransack the bed from top to bottom and from end to end. She prepared to empty the mattress, already vainly explored, in every direction, but Cérizet would not allow this extravagant measure, remarking that after the autopsy of the mattress a deposit of straw would remain on the floor that might give rise to suspicions. In order to leave herself no room for self-reproach, notwithstanding Cérizet's opposition, who thought such minuteness absurd, she wanted to remove the sacking that formed the bottom of the bed. Her senses must have been sharpened by the intensity of her search, for as she lifted the wooden frame she heard the noise of a small object dropping on the floor. Ascribing to this trifle, which any one else might have overlooked, greater importance than anything could justify, this ardent female explorer at once took a light, and, after probing the filth and rubbish that covered the flooring, she finally put her hand on a piece of polished steel half an inch long, and whose use was a mystery to her.

"It is a key!" exclaimed Cérizet, who had stood by with considerable indifference, but whose imagination at once started off at a gallop.

"Ah ha! You see!" exulted Madame Cardinal. "But what can it open?" added she reflectively—"a doll's wardrobe?"

"Not at all," he retorted, "it is a modern invention, and a very large lock can be opened with this little instru-

ment." At the same time he glanced rapidly at all the furniture in the room, went to the chest of drawers, and pulled them all out, looked into the stove, and into the table drawer, but nowhere did he see a sign of such a lock as this key might fit.

Mamma Cardinal was suddenly inspired.

"Stop! I noticed that from his bed the old thief never took his eyes off the wall opposite him."

"A cupboard hidden in the wall? That is not impossible," said Cérizet, hastily seizing the light.

And after attentively examining the door in the recess, which faced the head of the bed, he found nothing beyond a dense curtain of dust and cobwebs. He then tried the sense of touch, which is more thorough, and began to test and tap the wall all over. But the region off which Toupillier had never taken his eyes, at last revealed within a narrow space a hollow sound, and at once he knew that he was knocking on wood. He next rubbed the place vigorously with his handkerchief, which he had scrunched up, and, under the layer of dirt he cleared away, discovered an oak plank fitting hermetically into the wall. At one end of this plank was a little round hole—the keyhole to which the key in his hand belonged.

While Cérizet turned the key, which worked without difficulty, Madame Cardinal, holding the light, stood pale and breathless. But, cruel disappointment! the cupboard open, nothing appeared but an empty space, in vain illuminated by the candle eagerly thrust into it by the fish vender. Leaving this *bacchante* to howl her picturesque despair, and shower upon her dear uncle all the vilest epithets imaginable, Cérizet kept perfectly cool. After putting his arm into the opening, and testing the back of it—"An iron chest!"

he exclaimed, adding impatiently, "Why don't you hold up the light, Madame Cardinal?"

Then, as the light did not shine far enough into the space he wanted to examine, he snatched the candle from the neck of the bottle, where, in default of a candlestick, the Cardinal had stuck it, and moved it carefully over every part of the iron place he had discovered.

"No lock!" said he, after a scrupulous investigation. "There must be some secret."

"What an old villain of an uncle!" hissed Toupillier's niece, while Cérizet's bony fingers were feeling for useful indications.

"Now I have it!" said he, after half an hour of groping and wondering, during which time the life of his lady accomplice seemed as if suspended.

Under the pressure to which it was subjected, the iron plate gave way, and in the good-sized hole now thrown open was disclosed a heap of loose gold, on the top of which was a red morocco case, that, by its size, gave promise of splendid booty.

"I will take the diamonds for the marriage portion," said Cérizet, in presence of the gorgeous jewels contained in the case. "You, mother, would not know how to dispose of them, so I will leave you the gold for your share. As for the bonds and the house, they are not worth the trouble of making the good man make another will."

"Stop a minute, my little man!" objected Madame Cardinal, who found this division rather too summary. "We must count the cash first."

"Hush!" said Cérizet, pausing to listen.

"What is it?" asked she.

"Did you hear nothing stirring below?"

"I heard nothing."

Cérizet signed to her to keep silent, and listened with redoubled attention.

"I hear footsteps on the stairs," said he shortly.

And he quickly threw the case back into the iron chest, and tried to close it.

While he was expending his strength in useless efforts the steps drew nearer.

"Yes, some one is coming up!" whispered Madame Cardinal, appalled.

Then clutching at a straw, she said—"Nonsense, it is only the maniac! They say she wanders about at night."

In any case, the maniac had a key to the room, for a moment later that key was inserted in the lock. With a rapid glance the old woman measured the space between herself and the door, doubting whether she had time to push the bolt; but, calculating that she would be forestalled, she quickly blew out the light, to give herself such chances as darkness might afford. Her pains were superfluous. The marplot who entered had a candlestick in his hand.

When she saw that she had to deal with a little old man of puny figure, Madame Cardinal, her eye aflame, rushed at him like a lioness defending her cubs.

"Keep cool, my good woman," said the old man in a mocking tone, "we have sent out to look for the rounds; they will be here in a moment."

The word "rounds" made Madame Cardinal's legs give way under her, as the vulgar saying goes.

"But, my good sir, the rounds!" said she in terror. "We are not thieves."

"That does not matter. If I were you, I would not wait

for them," said the old man. "They sometimes make annoying mistakes."

"Then, may one clear out?" said the fish dealer incredulously.

"Yes, after you have given me what has *accidentally* strayed into your pockets."

"Oh, my dear sir, there is nothing in my hands, nothing in my pockets; one does not come into the world to do evil. I was only here to take care of my poor dear old uncle. You may search me if you like!"

"Enough! Get out!"

She did not wait to be told twice, and went off downstairs full speed. Cérizet prepared to follow her.

"As for you, Monsieur, it is another matter," said the old man. "We have something to talk about; but if you behave well, everything may be arranged in good part."

Be it that the effects of the drug were now worked off, or be it that the disturbance had roused him, Toupillier opened his eyes, and looked about him like a man who does not know where he is. The next moment, seeing his beloved cupboard open, his excitement gave him strength to shout out loudly enough to have waked the house, "Thieves! thieves!"

"No, Toupillier," said the new-comer, "you have not been robbed. I arrived in time, and nothing has been taken."

"And you are not going to have him arrested—that rascal there?" cried the beggar, pointing to Cérizet.

"The gentleman is not a thief," answered the other, "but, on the contrary, he is a friend who came up with me, to help me." At the same time turning to Cérizet—"I think, my dear sir," he said in a low tone, "that we shall do well to

postpone the interview I wish to have with you. To-morrow at ten o'clock at Monsieur du Portail's, next door. After what has happened this evening, it might be inconvenient for you not to accept the invitation. I should infallibly find you, as I have the honor of knowing who you are. It is you whom for a long time the opposition journals were in the habit of calling 'the bold Cérizet.' "

In spite of the keen irony of this reminiscence, Cérizet, seeing that he would not be more rigorously dealt with than Madame Cardinal, was well enough pleased with this turn in the situation, and after promising punctuality, hastily sneaked away.

The next day Cérizet did not fail to present himself at the appointed place. After giving his name at the porter's wicket, he was admitted to the house, and directly taken to du Portail's study, where he found that gentleman at work. Without rising, and motioning his guest to a seat, the little old man continued a letter he had begun. After closing the envelope, and sealing it with such care as to prove him either exceedingly precise and fastidious or a man who had exercised diplomatic functions, du Portail rang for Bruno, his manservant, and said to him as he handed him the letter: "For the district magistrate."

He then carefully wiped the steel pen he had just been using, and arranged symmetrically all the things lying about his desk; and it was only after he had finished all this funny little fussing that he turned to Cérizet—"Did you know that we had lost our poor Monsieur Toupillier last night?"

"No, I did not," said Cérizet, putting on the most sympathetic air he was able. "You, sir, are the first to tell me the news."

"You, at least, might have looked for as much. When a person doses a dying man with a large bowl of hot wine, which must have been drugged into the bargain—for after a single glass, the woman Perrache lay in an almost lethargic sleep all night—he has evident intentions of hastening the catastrophe."

"I am ignorant, Monsieur, of what Madame Cardinal may have given her uncle. I, no doubt, committed the imprudence of helping the woman to look after her interests, in a matter of a legacy, to which she thought herself by right entitled; but as for making an attempt on the old man's life, I am incapable of such a thing, and nothing of the kind ever entered my thoughts."

"Did you write me this letter?" abruptly asked du Portail, taking a sheet of paper from underneath a paper weight of Bohemian glass, and presenting it to his interlocutor.

"That letter?" said Cérizet, with the hesitation of a man who does not know whether to lie or to tell the truth.

"I am sure of what I am saying," resumed du Portail. "I have a mania for autographs, and own one of yours, from the days when the opposition elevated you to the glorious estate of a martyr. I have compared the writing, and it is certainly you who yesterday, as it appears from this note, apprised me of the financial embarrassments in which young la Peyrade is now struggling."

"Being aware," answered the usurer of the Rue des Poules, "that you had taken a Demoiselle de la Peyrade to live with you, who must be Théodose's cousin, I guessed you to be that unknown friend who more than once has so generously assisted him. As I have a great affection for the poor boy, I took the liberty, in his interests, to—"

"You did well," interjected du Portail. "I am delighted to have come upon a friend of Théodose's, and I cannot deny that yesterday evening it was that fact that saved you. But what do these bills of twenty-five thousand francs mean? Are his affairs in very bad disorder? Does he lead a dissipated life?"

"On the contrary," replied Cérizet, "he is a Puritan, devoted to religion. As a barrister, he has refused to take any but poor people as clients. He is also going to make a rich marriage soon."

"Oh, he is going to marry! And whom is he going to marry?"

"His name is coupled with a Demoiselle Colleville's, a daughter of the secretary at the municipality—eleventh district. The girl has no money of her own, but a Monsieur Thuillier, her godfather, a member of the general council of the Seine, promises a suitable marriage portion."

"And who managed this?"

"La Peyrade has done a great deal for the Thuillier family, to whom he was introduced by Monsieur Dutocq, clerk of the court in the district."

"But you write that it is in favor of this Monsieur Dutocq these notes were made out. So it is apparently a case of matrimonial brokerage?"

"It might be something of the kind," Cérizet assented. "You know, Monsieur, that in Paris transactions of that kind are not at all rare; even the clergy do not object to taking a hand in them."

"Is the match at a very advanced stage?" asked du Portail.

"Yes, very, and the affair has been progressing rapidly, especially during the last few days."

"Well, then, my dear sir, I count on you to break it up. I have other plans for Théodose, another marriage to propose."

"Allow me! If this match fails, he cannot possibly pay the debt, and I have the honor to observe that those bills constitute a legal claim. Monsieur Dutocq is clerk to a justice of the peace, which is to say that he knows what he is about in such matters."

"The debt to Monsieur Dutocq," rejoined du Portail, "you must buy. You will be able to effect an understanding with him on this point. At the worst, should Théodose become recalcitrant, these documents would be a formidable weapon in our hands. You would undertake the prosecution in your own name, and without inconvenience or risk, as I am ready to liquidate the whole amount, capital and interest, as well as costs."

"You are a square man in business, Monsieur," said Cérizet, "and it is really a pleasure to be your agent. Now that you find the time has come to initiate me further into the details of the mission which you have done me the honor to—"

"We were just now speaking," resumed du Portail, "of Théodose's cousin, Mademoiselle Lydie de la Peyrade. This young person, who is no longer quite young, being close upon thirty, is a natural child of the famous Mademoiselle Beaumesnil of the Théâtre-Français, and of la Peyrade, commissioner-general of police under the Empire, and our friend's uncle. Up to the day of his death, which came suddenly, and left his daughter without a penny—he loved her tenderly, and had acknowledged her—I was on terms of closest friendship with that excellent man. The poor girl underwent such a severe shock at her father's death

that her reason was afterward slightly impaired. But a propitious change declared itself no later than yesterday, and I contrived a consultation between Doctor Bianchon and the two head physicians of Bicêtre and La Salpêtrière. These gentlemen were of the unanimous opinion that marriage and the birth of a child would certainly insure the patient's recovery, and you understand that the remedy is too easy and too agreeable not to be tried."

"Then," inquired Cérizet, "it is his cousin, Mademoiselle Lydie de Peyrade, that Théodose is to marry?"

"You have said it. But you must not think I am asking our young friend—if he is willing—for a gratuitous sacrifice. Lydie is an amiable person, she is talented, and has a charming disposition, and her influence will be useful to her husband in politics. She, moreover, has a tidy fortune, comprising what her mother left her and all I have, and which, in default of direct heirs, I shall settle on her in the marriage contract; besides, there is a considerable legacy that has come to her this very night."

"What!" said Cérizet, "did old Toupillier—?"

"In his holograph will he declares her his sole legatee. So, you perceive, I am entitled to thanks for taking no proceedings in your escapade with Madame Cardinal, since it was really our property you intended to plunder."

"Dear me!" answered Cérizet. "I do not pretend to excuse Madame Cardinal's indiscretion. However, as a genuine heir, dispossessed by a stranger, she had some right to the indulgence you were kind enough to show her."

"There you are mistaken. This seeming liberality toward Mademoiselle de la Peyrade is nothing more than a restitution."

"A restitution?" asked Cérizet, puzzled.

"Yes, and nothing is easier to prove. Do you remember a diamond robbery, some ten years ago, affecting one of our dramatic celebrities?"

"To be sure I do! I was then editor of one of *my* newspapers, and wrote the 'News of Paris' column myself. But your celebrity—why, it must have been Mademoiselle Beaumesnil!"

"Exactly—Mademoiselle Lydie de la Peyrade's mother."

"So that," Cérizet hastened to add—"that wretch of a Toupillier— But stop, it seems to me that the thief was caught. His name was Charles Crochard. It was even whispered that he was a natural son of a prominent personage, the Count de Granville, attorney-general in Paris under the Restoration."

"Well," du Portail began to explain, "here is what happened. The theft, which you remember too, was committed in a house of the Rue Tournon, where Mademoiselle Beaumesnil was living. Charles Crochard, a good-looking young fellow, enjoyed great privileges there, it appears."

"Yes, yes, I recollect Mademoiselle's embarrassment very distinctly when she gave her testimony, and the sort of faintness in her voice when the president of the assize court asked her age."

"The robbery," continued the old man, "was audaciously perpetrated in broad daylight, and, once master of the jewels, Charles Crochard went to the Saint-Sulpice church, where he was to meet an accomplice. Having provided himself with a passport beforehand, this accomplice was to leave at once, with the diamonds, for foreign parts. Chance ordained that, instead of the man he was expecting, and who was a few minutes late, the culprit found himself face to face with a famous detective, whom he knew quite

well; seeing that this was not the young scamp's first difference with the law. His friend's failure to appear; the presence of the police agent, who seemed to be eying him curiously; the commotion of his mind, and a quick movement, entirely accidental, of the detective toward the door—this gave the thief the impression that he was being watched. He lost his head, and in his excitement thought of nothing but getting rid of the fatal jewel-case, which would be found on his person by the imaginary police waiting for him outside. Catching sight of Toupillier, at that time the holy-water man, he cautiously approached him, and said—"Will you be kind enough to take charge of this package for me? It is a box of lace. I am going to see a countess near by, who is slow pay, and instead of settling my bill she will want to look at this novelty, and will want to buy it on credit. I would rather not take it with me. But be careful not to disturb the paper round the box, because nothing is so difficult as to fold a parcel again in the same creases."

"How stupid!" ejaculated the short-loan usurer spontaneously. "Of course he made the other man want to look inside the paper!"

"You are a sound philosopher," nodded du Portail. "An hour after, when all danger appeared to have subsided, Crochard went for his parcel; but Toupillier had gone. You may well imagine how anxiously, at the first mass the next morning, the robber made for the holy-water man. But night brings counsel, and the fellow boldly declared that he had received nothing, and that he did not know what the other man meant."

"And there was no way to attack him and bring him to book!" commented Cérizet, much inclined to express his sympathy with such an impudent trick.

"The theft was no doubt already public, and Toupillier, a strategist of the first order, had correctly calculated that if the delinquent accused him he would expose himself and be obliged to give up the spoil. At the trial, Charles Crochard said not a word of his discomfiture. Condemned to ten years' confinement at hard labor, during the six years he spent in the galleys—part of the sentence being remitted—he never once opened his mouth to any one as to the breach of confidence of which he had been the victim."

"That was a good game!" said Cérizet. He was greatly taken with the story, and was regarding the thing in the light of a practitioner and an artist.

"In the meantime," du Portail went on, "Madame Beaumesnil had died, leaving her daughter the tatters of a once splendid fortune and also her diamonds, which she bequeathed to her in a separate clause, in case they should be discovered."

"Ah, I see," said Cérizet. "That spoiled it for Toupillier. Having a man of your calibre to deal with—"

"Possessed with the idea of revenge, Charles Crochard's first step, when he had regained his liberty, was to accuse Toupillier as receiver of the jewel case. Brought to the bar of justice, Toupillier made such an innocent defence that, there being no proofs of any sort forthcoming, the examining judge let him go. As the result, however, he lost his place as holy-water man, and only with great difficulty obtained permission to beg in the porch of Saint-Sulpice. I was convinced of his guilt, and, notwithstanding the acquittal, had him very closely watched, although I counted principally on my own efforts. Having plenty of leisure, I kept persistently on his track, and made it the great business of my life to unmask the rascal. He then lived in the

Rue Cœur-Volant. I established myself as a tenant in the room next to his, and one evening, through a gimlet hole which I had laboriously drilled through the walls between the rooms, I saw our friend take the case from a most ingeniously conceived hiding place, and spend nearly an hour in delighted contemplation of the diamonds, which he held up to the light to see them sparkle, and then pressed to his lips with passion. The man loved them for their own sake, and had never thought of making money by them."

"I understand. A mania something like Cardillac's the jeweller who is the subject of a melodrama."

"The same sort of thing," said du Portail. "The wretch had fallen in love with his jewels, and when, a little later on, I went to him and told him I knew all, in order not to lose what he called the joy of his life, he asked if he might keep them during his lifetime, in consideration of appointing Mademoiselle de la Peyrade his only heir. At the same time he confessed to owning a large sum in gold, which was accumulating every day, and besides that a piece of landed property, and some State bonds."

"If he spoke in good faith, the proposition was acceptable; the interest on the capital represented by the diamonds was easily made up for by the other items of the legacy."

"You see, my good man, I was not wrong to trust him. In any case, I took full precautions. I insisted upon his taking lodgings in my house, where I could watch him closely, and the hiding place whose secret you so soon discovered was my idea. But what you do not know is that the secret, at the same time that it opened the iron chest, set in motion a loud bell in my room, intended to warn me of any attempt to carry off our treasure."

"Poor Madame Cardinal!" mirthfully exclaimed Cérizet, "how little she bargained for that!"

"Now here," said du Portail, "is the situation. Because of my interest in my old friend's nephew, and also because this marriage seems to me very proper on account of the relationship, I want Théodose to espouse his cousin and this dowry. Since it is possible, because of the girl's mental condition, that la Peyrade will decline to enter into my views, I have not considered it advisable to make the proposal directly to himself. You came across my path; I know you to be sharp and wily, and so I thought of placing this little matrimonial negotiation in your hands. Now, you understand, you will tell him of a rich young lady, with a slight defect, but, on the other hand, a fat little marriage portion. You will give no names, but will at once come back and report how your overtures were received."

"Your confidence," replied Cérizet, "is as gratifying to me as it is flattering, and I will do my best to show myself worthy of it."

"But you need give yourself no illusions," resumed du Portail, "for a refusal will be the first impulse of a man who has another match in mind. Nevertheless, we shall not consider ourselves defeated. I do not easily relinquish an idea when I believe it to be right. And even if we had to push our zeal for la Peyrade's happiness as far as to have him locked up in the Clichy debtor's prison, I have made up my mind not to give up a plan which I am sure he will ultimately acknowledge as a happy one. Therefore, whatever happens, buy the debt from this Monsieur Dutocq."

"At par?" asked Cérizet.

"Yes, at par, if you can do no better. We will make no difficulties about a few thousand francs, but Monsieur

Dutocq ought to give us his support, or at least his neutrality, after the bargain is concluded. From what you have told me about the other marriage, I suppose it is unnecessary to observe that there is not a moment to be lost in putting the irons into the fire."

"I have a meeting arranged for the day after to-morrow with la Peyrade," said Cérizet. "We have a little matter to settle. Do you not think it would be well to wait until then, when I would incidentally bring your proposition forward? In case of a refusal it seems to me our dignity will be better off."

"So be it," agreed du Portail; "I cannot call that a delay. And remember, sir, that if you succeed, instead of having in me a man to call you severely to account for your imprudent assistance of Madame Cardinal, you will have placed me under a serious obligation to help you in everything. I have more influence than is generally supposed."

After such satisfactory talk, the two men could not but part in the best of understanding, and greatly pleased with one another.

Like the Tourniquet Saint-Jean, the Rocher de Cancale, whither the scene now changes, is to-day no more than a memory. The wine merchant's shop with a tin counter has taken the place of that *temple of taste*, that gastronomical sanctuary of Europe from the Empire to the Restoration.

The day before the meeting agreed upon between them, la Peyrade received from Cérizet these few words—"To-morrow, lease or no lease, at the Rocher, at half-past six."

As for Dutocq, Cérizet had occasion to see him every day, since he was his copyist, and had therefore given him verbal notice; but the attentive reader will observe the difference in the time specified for the second guest. "A

quarter past six, at the Rocher," Cérizet had told him. Evidently he wished to have a quarter of an hour with him before la Peyrade's arrival. This interval of time the money-lender reckoned to employ in haggling with Dutocq for the bills, and had speculated that, tendered pointblank and unexpected, the proposal would stand a better chance of a favorable reception.

"Do you know," began Cérizet, "that la Peyrade's marriage is at present in great danger of being stopped?"

"Stopped? What do you mean?" asked Dutocq.

"I am commissioned to propose another match to him, and I very much doubt that any choice will be offered him."

"What the devil are you lending yourself to another marriage for, when we have a mortgage on the first?"

"My good friend, one does not always control circumstances. I saw that, for certain reasons, the match we had arranged was going to water, and then I tried to get out of the business as soon as possible."

"Indeed? Then all women are fighting for this Théodose, are they? Who is the person, and is there any money in it?"

"The dowry is a fairly good one, and fully as large as Mademoiselle Colleville's."

"I don't care—la Peyrade signed the notes, and he shall pay."

"He will pay, he will pay—that is just the point. You are not a man of business, and neither is Théodose; he may take it into his head to dispute the validity of those bills of exchange. How do you know that if the court finds out their origin, and the Thuillier marriage does not take place, they will not be cancelled as having been signed without

value received? As for me, I can smile at the discussion. It cannot affect me. And besides, my measures are taken; but you, a clerk of the court, do you foresee no difficulties with the chancellor's office resulting from such a suit?"

"It seems to me, my dear fellow," retorted Dutocq, in the humor of a person confronted with an argument to which he knows no answer, "you have a mania for stirring up all sorts of business, and for interfering—"

"I repeat," asserted Cérizet, "that this piece of business came after me, and I saw so clearly at once that the evil powers against us could not be fought that I decided to save myself by a sacrifice."

"What sort of sacrifice do you mean?"

"I mean that I have sold my debt, leaving it to the purchasers to make their own terms with the barrister."

"But who bought the debt?"

"Who do you suppose would have put themselves in my place, if not the people sufficiently interested in the other marriage to force Théodose into it?"

"Then they cannot do without the drafts I hold?"

"No, but I did not care about disposing of them before consulting you."

"Well, what do they offer for them?"

"Hang it, my good man, just what I took myself; knowing better than you how dangerous their competition was, I decided to liquidate on poor conditions."

"But what are those conditions?"

"I let the bills go for fifteen thousand."

"Come, come!" said Dutocq, shrugging his shoulders, "you seem to think you can make up your loss by brokerage on the transaction, which is, perhaps, after all, a scheme plotted between yourself and la Peyrade."

"You are certainly very candid; a rascally idea shoots through your brain, and you bring it out with the most charming simplicity. Fortunately, you will presently hear my proposals to Théodose, and you will be able to judge from his behavior what sort of connivance there is between us."

"Very well," said Dutocq, "I withdraw the insinuation; but truly your employers are virtuous, and ought not to cut people's throats like that; besides, I have not a premium to retire on, as you have."

"This, my poor friend, is how I reason. I said to myself that dear Dutocq is dreadfully hampered for money to pay off what he owes for his place in the firm, and here is a way for him to settle it at once. The event proves how risky it is to compromise la Peyrade, so let us offer him cash down. The bargain is perhaps not really a bad one."

"True enough; but fancy losing two-fifths!"

"Let us see," said Cérizet, "you were just now speaking of a premium. I see a way of getting you one, and if you will promise to work against the Colleville match, and to reverse the part you have been playing in it up to now, I might not despair of offering you the round sum of twenty thousand francs."

"Oh, then you think that this new combination will not be agreeable to la Peyrade; that he will object? Should the heiress be some one from whom the rogue has already levied favors on account?"

"All I can tell you is that there is money to be made in the end."

"I ask no better than to take sides with you, and make myself unpleasant to la Peyrade. But five thousand francs, just think—it's really too much of a loss!"

At that moment the door opened, and a waiter ushered in the expected guest.

"You may serve us now," said Cérizet to the waiter; "no one else is coming."

It was evident that Théodose was beginning his flight toward the upper spheres of society. Elegance of attire was now the matter of his constant solicitude. He had on evening dress and patent-leather shoes, while his companions had on their ordinary clothes and dirty boots.

"Gentlemen," he began, "I believe I am a little late; but that devil of a Thuillier, with the pamphlet I am composing for him, is really most unendurable. I unfortunately have agreed with him to go over the proofs together, and at every new paragraph there is a fight. 'What I do not understand,' he always objects, 'the public will not understand either. I am not a man of letters, but I am a man of common-sense.' Every sentence means a struggle; I thought our session just now would never end."

"What do you expect, my dear fellow?" said Dutocq. "Any one who wishes to succeed must have the courage to make sacrifices. Once your marriage is accomplished, you will lift up your head."

"Ah, yes!" sighed la Peyrade; "I shall lift it up, for since you gave me this bread of agony to eat, I have been very tired of it all."

"Cérizet," laughed Dutocq, "is going to give us more nourishing food to-day."

At first they thought of nothing but doing honor to the bill of fare which the prospective chief tenant had ordered. As it often happens at these business dinners, at which every one is engrossed with the questions to come up, yet nevertheless avoids mentioning them for fear of putting

himself at a disadvantage by seeming too anxious, the conversation for some time turned upon general subjects, and it was only at the beginning of the dessert that Cérizet concluded to ask la Peyrade what he had decided about the lease.

"Nothing, my dear man," answered la Peyrade.

"What, nothing? It seems to me I left you enough time to come to some definite—"

"As a matter of fact, it is quite definite, for there will be no chief tenant. Mademoiselle Brigitte is going to take full charge of the house herself."

"That alters the case," said Cérizet, with an annoyed look. "After your pledges to me, I confess that I was far from looking for such a finale!"

"How can I help it, my dear fellow? I gave you my promise, saving contingencies, and I have not been able to give things a different turn. As a masterful woman and a specimen of perpetual motion, Mademoiselle made up her mind to take charge of the management of the property herself, and thus to put in her pocket the profits which were to accrue to you. I did all I could to show her what worry and trouble she would be subjecting herself to. 'Oh, nonsense,' she answered, 'it will keep my blood moving, and it will be good for my health.' "

"But how lamentable!" said Cérizet. "The poor creature will not know what end to take hold of first; she does not know what a vacant house is, and how to furnish rooms for the tenants from top to bottom!"

"I told her all those arguments," said la Peyrade, "but they made no impression whatever upon her, and I was quite unable to shake her determination."

Said Cérizet, "I am not looking at the matter through

my own spectacles; but though I do not doubt that you really made every possible effort to redeem your word, I see a very threatening symptom in your failure. This even makes me decide to tell you something which otherwise I would not have mentioned; but I think when one has an object, one should go straight to it without looking back or forward, and without letting any other ambition interfere."

"Come, now," said la Peyrade, "what is all this talk about? What is it you want? What is it going to cost?"

"My dear boy," replied Cérizet, taking no notice of his impertinence, "you yourself will appreciate what it is worth to have found a young lady, well educated, adorned with beauty and talents, and with a dowry at least equal to Céleste's, which is her own, too. Besides, she has one hundred and fifty thousand francs' worth of diamonds, like Mademoiselle Georges' on the country theatrical placards, and, what must appeal to a man of aspiring temperament, political influence which would be of the greatest advantage to her husband."

"And this treasure, have you your hand upon it?" asked la Peyrade incredulously.

"Better than that, I am authorized to offer you the lady. I may as well admit that I am commissioned to do so."

"My friend, you are making fun of me, and short of this phenix being afflicted with some horrible prohibitory—"

"I acknowledge," said Cérizet, "there is a slight defect; not concerning the family, however, for, to speak the truth, the young person has none."

"Ah," said la Peyrade, "a natural child!—And what else?"

"What else? She has been looked upon as an old maid for some time, and very likely is twenty-nine years old; but

nothing can be easier than to imagine an elderly *girl* as a *young* widow."

"Is that all the damage?"

"Everything that is irreparable."

"What do you mean? Has she cancer in the nose?"

Addressed to Cérizet, these words showed an aggressive state of mind, which, by the way, was plainly in evidence from the whole of the barrister's conversation during the dinner. But it was not a part of the banker's business to take note of it.

"No," he answered, "our nose is as well turned as our foot and our waist; but we may be a little touched with hysteria."

"Very well," observed la Peyrade; "and as from hysteria to mental alienation there is but a step—"

"Well, yes," admitted Cérizet, "worry has left a slight derangement in our brains, but the doctors are unanimous that with the first child every trace of this little mental disturbance will vanish."

"Of course I take the doctors' opinion as infallible," retorted the barrister; "but in spite of your report you will allow me to keep to Mademoiselle Colleville. It may, perhaps, be absurd to make the avowal, but I am gradually falling in love with the girl. It is not that her beauty is very resplendent, or that the magnificence of her dowry dazzles me, but I find innocence and good sense in the child, and, what is very attractive to me, earnest, sincere piety. I think a husband would be happy with her."

"Yes," sneered Cérizet, who, having once been an actor, remembered the words of Molière, "your marriage will be stuffed with sweetness and delight."

This allusion to Tartuffe was keenly felt by la Peyrade,

who lashed out angrily—"Through contact with her innocence, I shall disinfect myself from the ignoble company I have been keeping too long!"

"And you shall pay your notes, too," rejoined Cérizet, "which I advise you to do without the least possible delay, for Dutocq here was just saying to me that he would not object to seeing the color of your money."

"I? Not at all!" said Dutocq. "On the contrary, I said that our friend's delays are quite in order."

"Well, then," said la Peyrade, "I am of Cérizet's opinion, and I hold that the less legitimate a debt is, and consequently the more impeachable and more disreputable it is, the more speedily ought it to be liquidated."

"But, my dear la Peyrade," urged Dutocq, "really you are speaking in such a bitter tone—"

Then, taking out a pocketbook, "Have you your papers there, Dutocq?" inquired la Peyrade.

"No, I have not, my dear fellow," answered the clerk of the court, "and I am the less likely to have them about me, as they are in the hands of Cérizet."

"Very well," and the barrister rose from the table, "whenever you want to come to me, I will pay over the counter. Cérizet can tell you something about that."

"What, you are going without taking coffee?" said Cérizet in the last throes of amazement.

"Yes. At eight o'clock I have a professional appointment. Anyhow, we have told each other all we had to say: you have not the lease, you have your twenty-five thousand francs, and Dutocq's are ready, whenever he shall be pleased to present the bills at my office. So I see nothing to prevent me from going about my business, and I salute you very cordially."

"Oho!" said Cérizet seeing la Peyrade go, "this means a rupture!"

"And it was emphasized as much as possible," remarked Dutocq. "With what a grand air he flourished his pocket-book!"

"Yes; but where the devil can he have got the money from?"

"No doubt," replied the clerk of the court ironically, "where he got the money to retire the notes which you were obliged to surrender so cheaply."

"My dear Dutocq," said Cérizet, "I will explain to you the circumstances under which that insolent wretch released himself from me, and you shall see if he has not in fact robbed me of fifteen thousand francs."

"Possibly so, but you, my fine agent, wanted to abstract ten thousand from me."

"Not at all. I was quite formally commissioned to buy the debt, and you must admit that my offer had mounted to twenty thousand, when our handsome Théodose came in."

"At any rate," said Dutocq, "we will go to your house from here, and you will give me the drafts, for you understand that to-morrow, as soon as anybody is astir, I shall certainly present myself at the gentleman's office; I do not want to leave his paying humor time to cool."

"And you are right, for I promise you that very soon indeed there will be trouble in his life!"

The two boon companions went into the street together, and the man of the Rue des Poules took his friend for their coffee to a wretched tavern in the Saumon Arcade. There the host recovered his good humor. He was like a fish who had been on land, and who had been again thrown into the

water. Arrived at that stage of degradation in which a man is ill at ease in places frequented by decent people, it was with a species of glee that Cérizet found himself in his element again, in this hole where a boisterous game of pool was being played for the benefit of "a hero of the Bastille." Cérizet had the name of an able billiard player in this establishment, and was asked to take part in the game just begun. In technical language, he "bought a cue," that is to say that one of the participants in the tourney sold him his place and chances. Dutocq slipped away under cover of this incident, saying that he was going to inquire about a sick friend.

Soon after, his coat off and a pipe between his teeth, Cérizet had just made one of those royal shots that call for the wild demonstrations of the gallery, when his triumphant air of victory was most direfully dampened.

From among the onlookers, his chin resting upon his walking-cane, du Portail was watching him. A deep flush overspread Cérizet's cheeks, who hesitated to bow or to recognize such an unlikely person in such an unlikely place. But his play suffered so much from his perturbation that very soon after a bad stroke threw him out of the game. While he was putting his coat on in a rather bad humor, du Portail got up, and, raising his elbow as he went out, said in a low tone—"Rue Montmartre, at the end of the Arcade!"

When they met, Cérizet had the bad taste to try to explain the untidy garb and society in which he had been found.

"But in order to see you there," said du Portail, "I had to be there myself."

"That is true," answered the usurer, "and I am aston-

ished to find a quiet resident of the Saint-Sulpice district in that place."

"Which proves to you," rejoined du Portail in a tone which cut short all explanations and all curiosity, "that I am in the habit of going about everywhere, and that my star shows me the path of people I want to find; I was thinking of you at the moment you came in— Well, what have you accomplished?"

"Nothing much," said Cérizet. "After playing me a miserable trick, and thwarting me in a splendid transaction, our man rejected my overtures with utter contempt. There is no hope of getting his notes to Dutocq; la Peyrade seems to be in funds, as he wanted to retire his drafts then and there, and by to-morrow morning he will certainly have redeemed them."

"So, then, he looks upon his marriage with this Demoiselle Colleville as a certainty?"

"Not only does he so regard it, but he now maintains that it is a marriage for love. He used his eloquence to persuade me that he was seriously in love."

"Very well! I will undertake to tame the gentleman. You need only come to see me to-morrow, to inform me about the family he expects to enter. You have missed one stroke of business, but never mind that, I will find others for you."

Upon which du Portail signed to a passing cab which was empty, got in, and giving Cérizet a friendly but patronizing nod, directed the driver to the Rue Honoré-Chevalier. Arrived at the Central Market, Cérizet, still puzzling over the solution of his problem, was rudely disturbed in his meditations by a hard slap on the back. Turning round quickly, he found himself confronting Ma-

dame Cardinal, whose presence in this region, where she came every day to supply herself for her traffic, was by no means astonishing.

Since the redoubtable evening at Toupillier's, in spite of the clemency vouchsafed, the good woman had thought well to make none but very limited appearances at her domicile, and for two days she had been drowning the sorrows of her downfall in strong libations. With a thick tongue and an inflamed countenance, she addressed Cérizet—"Well, how did you get on with the little old man?"

"I let him understand in a few words that he and I had simply misunderstood each other. In the whole affair, my poor Madame Cardinal, you acted with unpardonable imprudence. When you asked my assistance in securing your uncle's legacy, did you know that he had a natural child to whom he had long ago intended to leave everything by will? The little old man who interrupted your absurd attempt to anticipate the inheritance was no less a person than the legatee's guardian."

"Oh, he is a guardian, is he?" said she. "Oh, they are nice people, those guardians, to talk to a woman of my age because she wanted to find out if her uncle was going to leave her anything—to talk of sending for the rounds! It is horrible, it is disgusting!"

"Come," said Cérizet, "you need not complain, Madame Cardinal; you got out of the scrape very well."

"And what about you, who picked locks and tried to get hold of the diamonds, pretending you wanted to marry my daughter? And do you think she wanted you—my daughter? And a legitimate child, too? And didn't she say to me, 'Mother, I will never give my heart to a man with a nose like that'?"

"You have found your daughter, then?"

"Yesterday evening. She has left her rotten play-actor, and I can flatter myself she is now in a fine position, swimming in money, with her cab by the month, and thought a deal of by a lawyer who would marry her at once. But he says he must wait for his parents to die, because his father is a mayor, and he says the marriage might annoy the government. His father is mayor of the district, the eleventh district, Monsieur Minard, a retired cocoa merchant, tremendously rich."

"Yes, to be sure! I know him. And you say Olympe is with his son?"

"That is to say, they don't live together, to avoid gossip, and he only goes to see her from good motives. He is living with his father. Meanwhile they have bought their furniture, and put it with my girl in a lodging near the Chaussé-d'Antin. Swell part of the town, eh?"

"But that seems to me a very good arrangement," approved Cérizet, "and since, after all, Heaven did not intend us for each other—"

"Yes, that's how it is! And I think the child will be a joy to me some day, though there's something I would want to ask you about."

"What is it?"

"You see, my daughter being well off, it won't do for me to call out fish in the streets, and then, as my uncle has disinherited me, it seems to me I have a right to a little pension."

"My poor woman, you are dreaming! Your daughter is a minor; it is for you to take care of her, and not for her to pay you an allowance."

"Oh, then those who have nothing are to give to those

who have something!" said Madame Cardinal, waxing excited. "A nice thing the law is, just as good as the guardians who talk about getting the rounds in for nothing. Well, then, let him get his rounds! Let him have my head cut off! That won't stop me from saying that the rich are all thieves, and that the people ought to have a revolution to get back their rights! And then, my boy, you, my daughter, Minard the lawyer, and the little guardian, you will all get nothing!"

Seeing his ex-mother-in-law arrived at an altogether alarming pitch of agitation, Cérizet speedily quitted her, and even at a distance of fifty paces was pursued with loud epithets, which he inwardly swore to visit on her the next time she should come to his bank in the Rue des Poules for "accommodation."

As he reached his house, Cérizet, who was anything rather than brave, was startled by a figure in ambush near the door, by some one who came forward as if to meet him. Happily, it was only Dutocq, who had come for la Peyrade's bills of exchange. Cérizet handed them over with a bad enough grace, demurring at the suspicions that so early a visit implied.

Dutocq took no notice of the other worthy's wounded soul, and the next day, at an early hour, presented himself at la Peyrade's.

The Provençal paid on the nail, and to the sentimental utterances that Dutocq gave way to when he felt the money in his pocket he responded with marked coldness. Everything in his manner betrayed the slave who has broken his chains, and who proposes to put his liberty to no especially pious purpose. Taking his creditor to the door, the latter found himself face to face with a woman dressed like a ser-

vant, about to ring la Peyrade's bell. The woman seemed to be an acquaintance of Dutocq's, for he said to her—

"Ah, my little woman, we feel the need of consulting a lawyer, do we? You are right, some strange things were said about you at the family council."

"I am afraid of no one, thank God, and I can walk with my head up," answered the person so addressed.

"So much the better!" said the magistrate's clerk. "So much the better! But you will probably soon be summoned to appear before the judge in charge of the case. However, you are in good hands; friend la Peyrade will give you the best of advice."

"Monsieur is mistaken," replied the servant. "I have not come to consult this gentleman for the reason you think."

"Anyhow, be careful, my dear woman, for I warn you that you will be egregiously plucked. The relations are furious with you, and it will be impossible to persuade them you are not very rich."

So saying, Dutocq had fixed his eye on Théodose, who, ill at ease under this gaze, asked his client to step in.

Here is what had happened the day before, between this woman and la Peyrade.

He, it will be remembered, was in the habit of going to early Mass every morning at his parish church. For some time he had found himself the object of singular and inexplicable attention on the part of the woman we have seen enter his room. Had she lost her heart to him? This solution was incompatible with the mature age and devout air of the pietist, who, under her close-fitting Jansenist cap, still worn by a few fervent members of that sect in the Saint-Jacques district, made a profession of keeping her hair invisible, like a nun. On the other hand, clothes of almost

fastidious neatness, and a gold cross she wore at the neck by a black velvet ribbon, excluded the idea of timid, hesitating mendicity unable to embolden itself to a confession. The morning of the day on which the dinner at the Rocher de Cancale was to take place, la Peyrade, tired of the woman's manœuvres, had himself accosted her, asking her if she had any request to make.

"Is Monsieur," came the answer, in accents of mystery, "the celebrated Monsieur de la Peyrade, the advocate of the poor?"

"I am la Peyrade, and I happen to have occasionally pleaded for some of the poor of this district."

"Would you then be kind enough, Monsieur, to grant me an interview?"

"The place," objected la Peyrade, "is not well chosen. What you have to tell me seems to be important, since you have been hovering about me for some time. I live close by, Rue Saint-Dominique-d'Enfer, and if you will take the trouble to come to my office—"

"It shall not put you out, Monsieur?"

"Not in the least. My business is to attend to my clients."

"At what hour—not to inconvenience Monsieur?"

"Whenever you please. I shall be at home all the morning."

"Well, then, I shall hear another Mass and take the Sacrament. I would not have dared to at this one for thinking constantly of Monsieur. After prayers I can be at your house at eight, if that will suit."

"Yes, that will do. And there is no necessity for so much ceremony," la Peyrade concluded, with a touch of petulance.

At the hour stated, neither a minute sooner, nor a minute later, the pietist rang the barrister's bell, who, after experiencing some difficulty in inducing her to sit down, asked her to give the facts of her case.

The religious woman then had one of those convenient coughing fits which create a respite when one has an awkward subject to discuss. Finally, making up her mind to divulge the object of her visit, she began—"I wanted to inquire, sir, whether it might be true that a very charitable gentleman, who is now dead, left a fund to reward servants who are faithful to their masters."

"Yes, Monsieur de Montyon founded prizes for good conduct, which, it is true, are often bestowed on industrious and irreproachable domestics. But good conduct is not sufficient. To be entitled to the reward, acts of extraordinary devotion must have been performed, and really Christian self-sacrifice practiced."

"Religion," answered the pietest, "tells us to be humble, and I certainly would not think of speaking in my own praise but that for over twenty years I have been in the service of an old man, the stupidest old man, who has squandered all his money on inventions, and whom I am obliged to feed, and but that some people have thought I might not be quite unworthy of the prize."

"It is on such terms that the Academy bases its choice of candidates. What is your master's name?"

"Father Picot. He is never called anything else. He goes out dressed up as though it were carnival time, and the children gather about him, and call out, 'Good-day, Father Picot! Good-day, Father Picot!' But that is how he is; he does not care what people think of him. He goes about with his head full of his ideas, and it is no use my serving

him up a dainty little dinner. You might ask him what he has been eating, he could not tell you. A clever man though, and one who has turned out good scholars. Perhaps you may know young Monsieur Phellion, who teaches at the Saint-Louis College? He still comes for lessons frequently."

"Then," asked la Peyrade, "your master is a mathematician?"

"Yes, sir; it is mathematics that ruined him. He gave himself up to a lot of ideas in which there seems to be no sense, after first spoiling his eyesight at the observatory, near here, where he was employed for many years."

"You would have to get some testimonials attesting your long devotion to this old gentleman, after which I would draw you up a memorandum for the Academy, and would take the other steps."

"How good you are, sir," said the pietist, clasping her hands, "and if I might make so bold as to mention a slight difficulty—"

"What is your difficulty?"

"I have been told that to get a prize one must be quite poor."

"Not exactly that. However, the Academy makes it a point to select persons in bad circumstances, and such as have made sacrifices beyond their means."

"I flatter myself that I have made sacrifices, when a little legacy I inherited from my parents went all into housekeeping expenses, and when for more than fifteen years I have not been given a sou of wages, which at three hundred francs a year and compound interest would make a comfortable amount."

At the mention of compound interest, which pointed to

a certain degree of financial ability, la Peyrade looked at this modern Antigone more closely.

"But what about the difficulty you refer to?"

Said the pious individual: "It is about a very rich uncle, who never did anything for his family in his lifetime, having died in England, and having left me twenty-five thousand francs in his will."

"Certainly, there is nothing but what is natural and perfectly legitimate about that."

"Very well, sir, but I have nevertheless been informed that it might do me harm in the courts."

"That may be so, because, being better off now, the sacrifices you no doubt intend to continue for the benefit of your master would be somewhat less meritorious."

"Of course I shall never leave the poor man, in spite of his faults, although the little sum I have been left is in great danger."

"How so?" la Peyrade was impelled to ask from curiosity.

"Oh, sir, he only need get a sniff of my money, and it will be all gone into his inventions of perpetual motion, and all sorts of machines that have already ruined him, and me too."

"I understand, then, that your desire concerning the Academy and your master is, that the legacy you have inherited should remain secret?"

"What an able man Monsieur is, and how well he comprehends things!" said the pietist smiling.

"On the other hand, however," continued the barrister, "you do not propose to keep the money about you?"

"So that my master may find it and lay his hands on it? Besides, you will understand that for the sake of giving him

a few dainties—the good man—I would not object to the money bearing interest."

"And the highest interest possible, I suppose?" added the barrister.

"Not less than five or six per cent."

"I see. It is on account of a requisition to have the prize for good conduct awarded you, and on account of the investment to be made, that you have desired to consult me for so long a time?"

"Monsieur is so good, so kind, so encouraging!"

"After a few inquiries on my part, the prize will be an easy matter, but as for the investment being made with absolute safety, and strict secrecy being observed, that is much more difficult to advise you about."

"Oh, if I might venture," said the pietist.

"To do what?" asked la Peyrade.

"You understand me, sir—?"

"I? Not in the very least."

"I have been praying very hard in Church, just now, that Monsieur might take the money from me. I would trust him entirely to give it back to me, and not to speak of it."

At this moment he was reaping the fruit of his comedy of devotion to the poor and needy. The chorus of old women in the district, lifting his virtues to the skies, had created this unlimited confidence toward him in the pious servant. He at once thought of Dutocq, and was not far from believing that this woman had been sent to him by Providence itself. He therefore decided to play a bold game.

"My dear woman," said he, "I am in no need of money, and am not rich enough to pay you without loss to myself

your interest on twenty-five thousand francs. All I can do is to deposit it in my own name with the notary Dupuis. He is a good man, and you can see him on Sundays on the official bench in our parish church. Notaries, you know, do not give receipts, nor would I give you one, but will only promise to leave such information among my papers, in case of my death, as would secure you repayment of the money. You see it is a question of blind confidence, and at that I undertake it unwillingly, and purely to oblige a person who particularly commends herself to my favor, because of her piety and the charitable uses she intends to put her small fortune to."

"If the matter cannot be arranged otherwise—"

"That is all I think it possible to do," said la Peyrade. "However, I do not despair of finding you six per cent of interest, and you may count on its being paid you with utmost punctuality. Only, six months or a year might possibly elapse before the notary might be able to refund the capital, because the funds which notaries invest in mortgages are generally locked up for a more or less long period. Now, after you have been awarded the prize for good conduct, which there seems to be little doubt of my obtaining you, as you will then no longer have to conceal your little hoard—which it is of course in your interest to do at present—I must warn you that any indiscretion on your part would result in the money being handed back to you at once. Nor should I then hesitate to publish the way in which you kept your legacy secret from the master to whom you were supposed to be so entirely faithful. This, you see, would expose you as an impostor, and would hurt your reputation for saintliness very much."

"Oh, sir," exclaimed the pietist, "can you believe I am a woman who would say what one ought not to?"

"Dear me! my good woman, even in business everything must be thought of; money matters make the best of friends quarrel, and lead to quite unforeseen complications. Therefore, you had better reflect, and come back and see me in a few days. You may possibly come to a better conclusion by that time, and I, who would be rather lightly accepting such a responsibility, may perhaps have discovered further objections to the arrangement, which at this moment do not occur to me."

This adroit and final threat was to bring about the desired result at once.

"I have thought it all out," said the woman; "with so religious a person as Monsieur there is no risk whatever." And drawing a small pocketbook from the bosom of her dress, she produced twenty-five thousand francs in bank-notes.

It was with this money in his pocket that he repaired to the Rocher de Cancale, and perhaps it was to the many violent emotions that he had felt during that day that was due the sharp and hasty conduct which had brought about the rupture with his two associates. This ill-advised behavior accorded neither with his natural disposition nor with his acquired manner; but the money which he was carrying in his pocket, all hot, had gone to his head, and its possession had given him a haughty spirit of independence which he could not repress. He had thus thrown Cérizet out of the window without even consulting Brigitte; and, nevertheless, he had not the courage of his duplicity, since he had ascribed to the old maid a decision which emanated from his own imagination, and from his bitter

resentment toward the man who had so long held dominion over him.

To conclude: All through this day la Peyrade had not maintained himself as the perfect and infallible individual we have seen him up to now. Once already, as the bearer of the fifteen thousand francs which Thuillier had intrusted him with, he had been drawn into an irregular transaction, which, as its sequel, had necessitated the daring exploit with Sauvaignou.

In the long run, it is perhaps more difficult to be strong in good fortune than in bad. The Farnese Hercules, in his calm attitude of repose, more vigorously expresses the plenitude of his muscular power than all the other Hercules in violent action, represented in the throes of their labors.

PART THE SECOND

BETWEEN the two parts of this narrative a stupendous event has occurred in the life of Phellion. There is nobody who has not heard of the misfortunes of the Odéon, that ill-fated theatre which for many years was the ruin of all its managers. Right or wrong, the people of the district in which this dramatic paradox is situated are convinced that it is bound up with their own prosperity, and more than once the mayor and his satellites have made heroic attempts, redounding to their honor and glory, to galvanize the corpse. To be in touch with theatrical concerns is an ambition always aglow in the bosoms of the lower middle class, so that the successive saviors of the Odéon thought themselves grandly recompensed whenever they were given even the semblance of a part in the management of that enterprise. It was in this sort of connection that Minard, in his capacity of mayor of the eleventh district, had been called to the chair of the reading committee, with power to appoint assistants from a number of notabilities of the Latin Quarter at his own choice.

The exact progress of la Peyrade's designs upon Céleste's dowry will soon be revealed. But for the present let it be said that these designs, advancing toward maturity, had naturally been talked about, and as they seemed to antagonize both the candidature of young Minard the barrister, as well as that of Félix the schoolmaster, the hostility once manifested by Minard senior against old Phellion was

now transformed into an unequivocal disposition in favor of friendly relations. Nothing binds men so closely together and soothes their differences so well as the sense of a common repulse. Judged without the blindness due to paternal rivalry, Phellion was to Minard a noble Roman of incorruptible integrity, and a man whose little pamphlets had been approved of by the University; that is to say, a man of sound and tried intellect.

When, therefore, it devolved upon the mayor to select a staff for his dramatic chamber of inquisition, he had at once thought of Phellion, and as for that great citizen, the day when a place was tendered him on the august tribunal, he felt as if a golden crown had been placed upon his brow. It will readily be understood that it was not lightly, and not without profound meditation, that a man of Phellion's weight had accepted the high and holy post of authority offered him. He told himself that he would be filling judicial, ay, sacerdotal functions.

"To judge men," he had replied to Minard, who was surprised at his long hesitation, "is a terrible task in itself; but to judge intellects—who can believe himself qualified for such a mission?"

Once again his family, the rock that threatens all splendid resolutions, had undertaken to override his scruples, and the consideration of the boxes and the tickets, which the future member of the reading committee would be able to dispose of for their benefit, had aroused his dear ones to such an ardent state of fermentation that his moral independence had seemed threatened for a moment. But happily Brutus had been able to come to a decision to which he was urged by a veritable revolt of the whole Phellion tribe. Upon the remarks of Barniol, his son-in-law, and also from

personal inspiration, he persuaded himself that by always voting for works of unimpeachable morality, and of barring the way to every piece to which a mother could not take her daughter, he was called to render a signal service to public morality and order.

Phellion, to use his own language, had thus become a member of the Areopagus under Minard's presidency, and he was coming from a meeting at which he had been exercising these exalted functions, as *interesting as they were delicate*, when the conversation took place which we are about to record. It is indispensable to the comprehension of events which happened in this story, and throws into full relief the sentiment of envy which is one of the most salient characteristics of the middle class.

The session of the committee had been very stormy. At the reading of a tragedy called "The Death of Hercules," the classical party and the romantic party, carefully balanced by the mayor in his selection of the committee, had not been far from coming to blows. Twice Phellion had asked for the floor, and great was the astonishment of his colleagues at the wealth of metaphor that may flow from a speech by the major of the National Guard when his literary convictions are threatened. After the vote, victory accruing to the cause which Phellion had so eloquently championed, he said to Minard, as they walked down the stair of the theatre together—"We have done good work to-day! That 'Death of Hercules' reminded me very strongly of the 'Death of Hector,' by the late Luce de Lancival; the play we have just accepted is enamelled with sublime verses."

"Yes," said Minard, "it is versified with good taste; there are some fine sentences in it, and I confess that I

place literature of that kind rather above our friend Colleville's anagrams."

"Oh," said Phellion, "Colleville's anagrams are mere mental playthings, and have nothing in common with the grave message of Melpomene."

"But, I can tell you, he attaches extreme importance to these playthings, and regarding his anagrams, as in many other things, the noble musician has taken a lot of credit to himself. Anyhow, since their emigration to the Madeleine district, it seems to me that not only Sire Colleville, but his wife and daughter, the Thuilliers, and the whole collection of them, have assumed airs of importance not easy to account for."

"What can you expect? One must have a strong head to withstand the intoxicating fumes of opulence! Our friends have become very rich by the purchase of the house they decided to live in; they must be allowed a moment of dizziness. You cannot deny that the dinner they gave us yesterday as a house warming was really as well served as it was succulent."

"I, too," said Minard, "can flatter myself at having given some noteworthy dinners, which influential men in the government did not despise, but I did not on that account puff myself up beyond measure. As I was known to be, so I remained."

"You, sir, have long been accustomed to the luxurious life which your eminent commercial capacities brought you. Our friends, on the contrary, yesterday's passengers on the smiling vessel of Fortune, have not yet, as the saying goes, got their sea legs."

And in order to cut short a conversation in which Phellion found that the mayor was becoming caustic, he stopped

to take leave of him. Their houses did not lie in the same direction.

"Are you going across the Luxembourg?" asked Minard, not wanting to be behind-hand in politeness.

"I go across, but I go no further. I have promised to meet Madame Phellion at the end of the grand avenue, where she is waiting for me with the little Barniols."

"In that case," rejoined Minard, "I shall have the pleasure of making my bow to Madame Phellion, and at the same time I shall take a little airing, for though it is pleasant to listen to fine things, the brain becomes fatigued at the business we have just been pursuing."

Minard rightly perceived that Phellion was unready to respond to his rather bitter remarks touching the new Thuillier establishment. He did not, therefore, try to resume the subject with him, but when he had secured Madame Phellion for a listener, very sure that his views would find more sympathy—"Well, fair lady," said he, "that dinner yesterday—what did you think of it?"

"It was remarkably good," answered Madame Phellion, "and as soon as the bisk soup came on I noticed that some great artist like Chevet had replaced the ordinary cook. But there was a want of jollity; it was less genial than our little parties in the Latin Quarter; and, then, have you not observed that neither Madame nor Mademoiselle Thuillier seems to be the mistress of the house? I really began to think that I was at Madame— What do you call her? I have not yet been able to get her name into my head."

"Torna, Countess de Godollo," interposed Phellion, "the name is certainly most euphonious."

"As euphonious as you like, my friend, but to me it does not sound like a name at all."

"It is a Magyar name; or, to speak more vulgarly, a Hungarian name. As for ours, if one wanted to poke fun at it, one might say it seemed to have been borrowed from the Greek."

"Possibly so," said Madame Phellion, "but we have the advantage of being known, not only in our own district, but in the whole world of learning, where we have reached an honorable position, while this Hungarian Countess, who makes rain and sunshine at the Thuilliers, where does she come from? How, with her noble manners—for one cannot deny her those, and she is a very distinguished-looking woman—how did she contrive to fall in love with Brigitte, who smells of the soil and the porter's lodge to a degree that is nauseating? My belief is, that this devoted friend is a scheming adventuress, who scents a fortune, and has some little enterprise of her own in the background."

"Oh, then," said Minard, "you are still ignorant of the beginning of the friendship between the Countess Godollo and the Thuilliers."

"She is one of their tenants, and lives on the floor below them."

"Very true, but there are other details. Zélie, my wife, has them from Joséphine, who at the time wanted to enter our service, although she did not come, because our Françoise decided to stay. Let me tell you, my dear lady that it is altogether to Madame de Godollo that the Thuillier emigration is to be attributed. At the time that Mademoiselle Thuillier, upon la Peyrade's advice, decided to undertake the management of the house near the Madeleine, that young gentleman, who has less influence over her than he makes out, failed to persuade her to move into the grand apartment we visited yesterday. Mademoiselle Bri-

gitte objected to changing her habits, and to living so far away from her friends."

"Certainly," interrupted Madame Phellion, "for the price of a carriage every Sunday we must have different pleasures in prospect than such as the Thuilliers provide. To think that, excepting at the hop for the election to the general council, they never thought of opening their piano!"

"We would indeed," said Minard, "have been charmed to see a talent like yours sometimes called into requisition, but those are not the sort of ideas to occur to that dear Brigitte. To her, that would have meant two more candles to light. The five-franc pieces, that is her music. And you understand that when la Peyrade and Thuillier urged her to leave the Rue Saint-Dominique-d'Enfer, she was greatly exercised over the expense that the removal would entail. She judged correctly that under gilded ceilings her old furniture would look very singular."

"See how everything develops from something else," cried Phellion, "and how from the summit of society, filtering down to the lower classes, wealth sooner or later brings about the fall of empires."

"There, my dear major," Minard resumed, "you are trenching upon one of the most interesting questions of Political Economy. Many keen minds believe, on the contrary, that wealth is a very useful thing to make commerce move, which is certainly the life of every country. But in either case, that point of view, which is not yours, seems to be Madame de Godollo's, for her rooms are said to be exquisitely furnished. To drag Mademoiselle Thuillier into her own road of elegance, this is what she suggested to her: 'One of my friends, a Russian princess, for whom one of the best upholsterers in Paris has recently designed a

magnificent set of furniture, has suddenly been called away by the Czar, a gentleman who will not take a joke. So the poor woman is obliged to turn everything that she has into cash, and I am sure would sell the set for a quarter of the cost price, for ready money. Everything is nearly new, and there are even things that have never been used.' "

"So," exclaimed Madame Phellion, "all that splendor exhibited to our eyes last night is cheap second-hand splendor!"

"It is, as you say, Madame," Minard went on; "and what moved Mademoiselle Brigitte to take this glittering chance was not so much the desire for new furniture as the idea of a good bargain. Thus you see, that if the barrister pushed his way into Brigitte's favor by managing the purchase of the house for her, it is through bidding for the furniture that the stranger has obtained her foothold."

"It seems to me," said Madame Phellion, "that the Countess took the liberty of contradicting the barrister, and that she even did so rather sharply."

"Oh, it was very marked," replied Minard, "and he is aware of it, too. Her hostility seems to trouble him very much. He was making a good thing out of the Thuilliers, who, between ourselves, are rather stupid; but he now finds that he has a powerful foe, and is anxiously looking for a vulnerable spot."

"Well," said Madame Phellion, "it is only justice! For some time that gentleman, who used to do the modest and the humble, had been taking on intolerable airs of control over their affairs. He openly played at son-in-law, and, in fact, in the matter of Thuillier's election played us all a trick, when he made us the footstool of his matrimonial ambitions."

"Quite so,' said Minard; "but at present, I can assure you, the gentleman is at a discount. Nor will he every day be able to buy for 'his dear friend,' as he calls him, a million's worth of property for an old song."

"Do you say they got this house cheap?" asked Madame Phellion.

"They got it for nothing through a contemptible piece of underhand business, as I was told the other day by Desroches, the attorney, and which might even compromise our barrister friend very gravely, if it were known to the council of the Barristers' Association. Then, there is the election for the Chamber in prospect. Thuillier's appetite is becoming voracious, but he already perceives that Monsieur de la Peyrade will not find it so easy to cut him that slice of the cake, if it involves duping us again. It is for that reason they have turned to Madame de Godollo, who appears to be highly connected in political circles. But without mentioning the election at all, which is still far off, the Countess de Godollo is making herself more useful to Brigitte day by day, for it must be acknowledged that, without that great lady's help, the poor creature in her gilded drawing-room would look like a rag in a bride's wedding trunk."

"Oh, Monsieur Minard, how cruel you are!" said Madame Phellion mincingly.

"But really," he went on, "ask yourself conscientiously does Brigitte or does Madame Thuillier know how to entertain in a large house? It is the Hungarian who superintended all the arrangements; it is she who engaged the foot man whose neat appearance and intelligence you noticed; it is she who yesterday made out the bill of fare; she is in fact the guardian angel of the establishment, which without her

assistance would have been the laughing-stock of the whole district. And what is very singular, instead of being, as you first thought her, a parasite of the same species as the Provençal, this foreigner, who even seems to own a private fortune, proves herself not only disinterested but generous. Brigitte's dress and Madame Thuillier's, by which you were all struck, were presents from her, and it is because she herself presided in the dressing-room of our two hostesses that you were so surprised not to find them looking like scarecrows, as usual."

"But what may the motive be," said Madame Phellion, "of such friendship and devotion?"

"My dear wife," pompously declaimed Phellion, "human actions are not, thank God, always founded on selfishness and personal interest. There are still some few who delight in doing good for its own sake. Perhaps this lady saw in our friends people who might stumble in the ascent to the high sphere they are trying to attain, and after guiding their footsteps to the purchase of the furniture, as a nurse leads her charge, may now take pleasure in sheltering them with the protection of her knowledge and advice."

"You are full of illusions, my dear major," laughed Minard, as he bade the Phellions good-day, "but they are worthy illusions, and I envy you them."

The mayor of the eleventh district had spoken correctly both as to the transaction concerning the furniture and the stranger's influence in the Thuillier household. The Hungarian Countess was a woman of great tact and fine education, and when she assumed the direction of her friend's affairs, she had taken special care to avoid any appearance of arbitrariness. On the contrary, she flattered Brigitte's pretensions of being a model housekeeper, and affected to

seek her advice in the management of her own housekeeping, so that she appeared to desire mutual aid and co-operation rather than authority and power. Nor was la Peyrade blind to his rival's growing ascendency. Frankly opposing his suit for Céleste's hand, she supported that of Félix no less uncompromisingly; and Minard, whom this fact had not escaped, had taken the precaution to withhold it from those it most concerned, in the course of his long disquisition. La Peyrade was the more vexed at knowing his position thus undermined, and for quite unaccountable reasons, as he had himself been instrumental in giving the enemy the key to the fortress. His first fault had been to yield to the empty satisfaction of thwarting Cérizet from becoming chief tenant. Furthermore, if upon his recommendation Brigitte had not undertaken the management of the property, it would have been safe to wager that she would never have made the acquaintance of Madame de Godollo. But these were not his only mistakes. And his crowning error had been—it ultimately became evident—to urge the Thuilliers' removal from their humble home in the Latin Quarter.

At that time, when Théodose was at the zenith of his power over their hearts, he looked upon his marriage as an incontrovertible fact of the future and evinced an almost childish haste to rush into the fashionable and elegant sphere which now seemed opened to his ambition. He had thus abetted the Hungarian's promptings. He felt as though he was sending the Thuilliers on in advance to make his bed in the fine apartment he was one day to occupy with them. In this arrangement he had seen another advantage —that of interfering with Céleste's almost daily meetings with a rival evidently not to be despised. No longer living at a convenient distance, Félix would be obliged to diminish

the number of his visits, and it would then be easier to damage his cause with one whose favor he only held on condition of satisfactory religious views. The Provençal, by widening the horizon of the Thuilliers, was taking the risk of introducing competitors for the exclusive admiration of which hitherto he had been the object. In the provincial atmosphere they breathed, in default of any standard of comparison, Brigitte and her brother naturally placed him on a pedestal from which other divinities of a new social world would not fail to dislodge him, so that, independently of Madame de Godollo's effective machinations, the colonizing idea was a bad one as far as the Thuilliers were concerned, and regarding the Collevilles not much better. The Collevilles had followed their friends in the house near the Madeleine, where a rear flat had been leased them at a price within reach of their income. But Colleville found the apartment badly aired and lighted, and, now obliged to travel a considerable distance to his office every morning, he grumbled at the change, and occasionally vented his opinion that la Peyrade was turning tyrant. In addition, in order to keep up with the style of the quarter where she had taken up her residence, Madame Colleville had indulged in a stupendous debauch of hats, cloaks, and new dresses, which, as they resulted in the presentation of a quantity of large bills, conduced to frequent domestic upheavals. Céleste, no doubt, had fewer opportunities of seeing young Phellion, but she also had less occasions to be drawn into religious controversies with him, and absence, which is only a peril to weak attachments, made her think more tenderly and less theologically of the man of her choice. But these false calculations on the part of Théodose were as nothing compared to another cloud which darkened his star. By

dint of an advance of ten thousand francs, to which Thuillier had resigned himself with a very good grace, the barrister had led him to believe that in a week he could procure him the Cross of the Legion of Honor, and thus fulfil the secret wish of his whole life. Now, nearly two months had gone by without a sign of that pretty toy. The former assistant chief, who would so blissfully have promenaded his red rosette on the pavement of the Boulevard Madeleine, which he assiduously frequented, had still to be content with the flowers of the field to adorn his buttonhole, a privilege open to everybody, and of which there was no reason to be proud. True, that la Peyrade had spoken of an unforeseen and incomprehensible obstacle, which had set at naught all the kind efforts of the Countess de Bruel; but Thuillier made very little of this explanation, and in his bitter disappointment he was often inclined to say, like Chicaneau in the "Plaideurs," "Then, pay the money back!" However, the explosion was averted, because la Peyrade held him at bay with the famous treatise on taxation and redemption, whose composition had been interrupted by the bustle of the removal. During that exciting period, Thuillier had not been able to give his time to the revision of the proofs, over which, it will be remembered, he had reserved himself the right of minute criticism. Understanding that to restore his fast waning influence he must strike a decisive blow, it was just this pettifogging disposition upon which the barrister hoped to base a deep and bold scheme.

One day, when they were at the last pages of the treatise, a discussion arose about the word *nepotism*, Thuillier alleging that he had never seen this word written anywhere, and that it ought to be *neologism;* that is to say, according to middle class literary ideas, something equivalent to 1793 and

the Reign of Terror. Usually, la Peyrade took the absard comments of his "dear friend" in good part, but that day he lost his temper, gave Thuillier to understand that he might finish the task by himself which he criticised with such a luminous and intelligent spirit, and for several days remained out of sight. Thuillier first suspected a passing fit of ill humor. But la Peyrade's absence continuing, he began to feel the necessity of conciliatory overtures, and went to the Provençal's house, to make amends and end the quarrel. But, wishing to come out of the engagement with his pride unscathed, he said in an airy manner as he went into the room—"Well, my dear fellow, we were both right. Nepotism means the authority assumed in affairs by the nephews of the popes. I searched the dictionary, which gives no other definition. But, according to what Phellion told me, it seemed that in political language the word has been extended to mean the influence that corrupt ministers have allowed to be exercised upon them. So I think we may let the expression stand, though it is not used in the same way by Landais."

La Peyrade, who, while his visitor was talking, pretended to be very busy with his briefs, merely shrugged his shoulders and made no reply.

"Well," said Thuillier, "have you the proofs of the last two sheets? There is not much time to lose."

"If you sent nothing to the printers," answered la Peyrade, "there can be no proofs. As for me, I have not added a word to the manuscript."

"But, my dear Théodose," remonstrated Thuillier, "surely you are not mounting the high horse because of such a small matter! I do not fancy myself a writer, only, as the book will bear my signature, I think I am entitled to an opinion on one word."

"But, Monsieur Phellion," retorted the barrister, "is a writer, and since you have consulted him, I cannot see why you do not engage him to finish the work with you. I, for my part, have resolved to stop collaborating."

"Heavens! what a temper!" exclaimed Brigitte's brother. "Here you are in a rage, because I appear to have been in doubt as to the meaning of a word, and have consulted some one. You know very well that I have read out passages to Phellion, Colleville, Minard, and Barniol, as if the work were mine, to see what effect it will have on the public; but that is no reason why I should publish under my name any opinions they see fit to offer. Do you want to know the greatness of my confidence in you? Madame de Godollo, to whom I read a few pages last night, told me that such a pamphlet might draw the attention of the public prosecutor upon me. Do you think that has made me stop?"

"I do think," said la Peyrade ironically, "that the oracle of the house sees things very clearly, and I have no desire to bring your head to the block."

"All that is nonsense. Are you or are you not going to leave me in the lurch?"

"Literary disputes," averred the barrister, "divorce the best friends even more effectually than political sentiments, and I want to remove every provocation to argument between us."

"But, my dear Théodose, I have never posed as a man of letters. I believe I have good common-sense, and I speak my mind. You cannot scold me for that, and certainly, if you play me the mean trick of stopping to collaborate, I must conclude you have some other grievance against me that I know nothing of."

"I do not see any mean trick. Nothing will be easier

than for you not to issue a pamphlet. You will be Jérôme Thuillier just as before."

"But it seems to me that it was yourself who judged its publication would be of advantage to my election. And then, as I repeat, I have read parts of it to our friends. In the municipal council I virtually announced its appearance, and if the work does not appear now, I shall stand dishonored. They will say the government bribed me."

"You need only say that you are the friend of Phellion the incorruptible, that will answer for everything. You might even give Céleste to his nincompoop of a son, and the relationship would be a better protection still against suspicion."

"Théodose," then said Thuillier, "there is something you have not told me. It is unnatural that, because of a dispute about the meaning of a word, you want to ruin the friend of your choice."

"Well, then," said la Peyrade, after a moment's hesitation, "I do not like ingratitude."

"Nor do I," responded Thuillier, with animation, "and if you are accusing me of anything so base and vile, I demand an explanation. What is it you complain of? What fault have you to find with the man you still called your friend a few days ago?"

"Everything is the matter, and nothing. You and your sister are far too knowing to quarrel with one who, at the risk of losing his good name, has put a million into your hands. But I am not so innocent as not to see through things. There are individuals about you plotting to compass my destruction, and Brigitte's only concern is, to find some decent way of not keeping her promises. Men like me do not press a claim of this sort, but I admit I was far from expecting such treatment."

"Come, come," said Thuillier kindly, quite deceived by the tear that glistened in Théodose's eye, "I do not know what Brigitte may have been doing to you, but one thing is certain—which is, that I never have ceased to be your sincerest friend."

"No," said Théodose, "since I failed to get you the Cross, I am only good enough to be thrown to the dogs. Can I fight against hidden powers? Who knows but what this very pamphlet, which you have been talking about far too much, is the impediment? Those ministers are such fools that they would rather wait to have their hand forced by the stir your publication will make than simply reward your services now with a good grace. But political amenities of that kind would not be reckoned upon by your sister."

"The deuce! I think I am a sufficiently observant person, and I cannot see any change toward you in Brigitte."

"Quite so; your sight is so good that you do not even see that Madame de Godollo is always about her, and that they are becoming inseparable."

"Supposing, now, you were just the least bit jealous," suggested Thuillier archly.

"Jealous? I do not know if that is the right word; but your sister, who has no more than an ordinary mind, and whose unwarranted authority over a man of your superior intellect—"

"How can I help it?" said Thuillier, enjoying the compliment. "She is so devoted to me!"

"Such weaknesses exist, I know," resumed la Peyrade; "but your sister, I say, does not reach up to your ankle. Well, then, when a man of my stamp has given her his friendship and counsel in the way I have done, he is not

agreeably touched to see himself supplanted in her confidence by some haphazard woman, and that on account of a few rags of curtains and sticks of old furniture which she told her to buy."

"With women, you know, household questions throw all others into the shade."

"You ought also to see that Brigitte, who meddles in everything, undertakes to manage affairs of the heart too. And since you are so sharp-sighted, you ought to have observed, by this time, that in Brigitte's mind nothing is less certain than my marriage with Céleste. Yet my suit was officially authorized by you."

"Yes," exclaimed Thuillier, with importance, "and I would like to see any one presuming to interfere between us!"

"Leaving your sister out of the question, I can tell you of some one who is doing all she can to interfere, and that is Mademoiselle Céleste. In spite of their difference in religious views, she remains very complacently attached to that little Phellion."

"But why not tell Flavie to settle that?"

"As for Flavie, my dear fellow, no one knows her better than you do. She is a woman before she is a mother. I found it advisable to make a little love to her, and so, you understand, though she approves of the match, she does not exactly care to hasten it."

"No matter," said Thuillier. "I will speak to Céleste myself. It shall not be said that we are being ruled by a little girl."

"That is precisely what I do not want you to do!" cried la Peyrade. "I do not want you to intervene at all in this matter. Excepting in dealing with your sister, you have a

will of iron, and I do not wish it to be said that you pushed Céleste into my arms. On the contrary, I wish the child to dispose freely of her heart. Only, I think I am justified in asking that she decide finally between myself and Monsieur Félix, because I cannot endure this intolerable situation. Deferred until the day of your election as deputy, this marriage becomes a shadowy dream. I cannot allow the great event of my life to be made the sport of circumstances. And besides, the agreement we came to at first has the smell of a bargain about it that is distasteful to me. I must make a confession, which is forced upon me by these recent unpleasant happenings. Dutocq can tell you that, before you left your apartment in the Rue Saint-Dominique, within his hearing an heiress was proposed to me—quite seriously—who will be richer than Mademoiselle Colleville. I refused, because I am foolish enough to have lost my heart, and because an alliance with so honorable a family as yours seems highly desirable to me. But, after all, Brigitte must be made to understand that, if Céleste refuses me, I am not thrown on the street."

"I willingly believe you," said Thuillier; "but to leave the whole decision to that child, if, as you say, she has a preference for Félix—"

"That does not matter to me," interrupted the barrister. "I must be relieved from this untenable position at once. You will not get another page out of me until the question is settled one way or another."

"What is the form of your ultimatum?"

"I think that in a fortnight a girl should be able to make up her mind."

"No doubt; but I do not like to leave the thing to Céleste's judgment, without appeal."

"I will take the risk of that. I shall be released from uncertainty, which is my principal aim, and, between ourselves, I am not so foolhardy as you think. No son of Phellion's—which is to say, obstinacy incarnated in stupidity—will have done with his philosophic doubts in a fortnight, and Céleste will certainly not accept him as a husband until he has given proof of conversion."

"That may be so. But supposing she should temporize, supposing she should decline to choose between the alternatives?"

"That is your affair," answered the Provençal. "I do not know what you mean by 'family' in Paris. But I know that in our county of Avignon no such liberty allowed a little girl has ever been heard of. If you, your sister (assuming she plays fair), and a father and a mother cannot make a child, whose dowry you are providing, do something so simple and reasonable as to choose freely between two suitors—then good-day to you! You had best simply write on your door that Céleste is queen and empress!"

"We have not quite come to that," said Thuillier, with an authoritative air.

"As for you, old boy," concluded the lawyer, "our next meeting must be adjourned until after Céleste's decision. Then I will set to work, whatever she has determined, and in three days all will be finished."

"At last I know what is on your mind. I will speak to Brigitte."

Thuillier also spoke to Madame Colleville, intimating to her that she must apprise her daughter of the plans regarding her future.

Céleste's inclination for Félix Phellion had never been formally encouraged or sanctioned. Flavie, in fact, had

once expressly forbidden her to give the young professor any hope. But being seconded by her godmother, Madame Thuillier—the only person in whom she confided—she quietly yielded to the gentle passion, without troubling about the obstacles that might some day bar her felicity. So that when she was ordered to choose between Théodose and Félix, the innocent child saw only one side of the alternative, and imagined she would profit by an arrangement which was to leave her free to dispose of her hand as her heart might dictate.

But Monsieur de la Peyrade had made no miscalculation when he reckoned that the young girl's religious intolerance on the one hand, and the young man's philosophic obduracy on the other, would prove an invincible impediment to their reconciliation.

On the very day Flavie had been charged to communicate Thuillier's sovereign behest to Céleste, the Phellions came to spend the evening at Brigitte's, and a sharp encounter took place between the two young people. Mademoiselle Colleville could have dispensed with her mother's injunction as to the great impropriety of mentioning as an argument, in her controversy with Félix, the terms of his probationary position; for Céleste had at once too much delicacy and too deep a religious sentiment to wish for her lover's conversion from any motive but real conviction. They therefore spent the entire evening in theological discussion, and such are the Protean qualities of love that, in the black gown and square cap he wore on this occasion, he appeared to greater advantage than one would have expected. But in this instance, Phellion junior was unfortunate to the last degree. Besides making no concessions, he argued in a frivolous and sarcastic tone, and at last suc-

ceeded in rousing poor Céleste to such a state of anger that she forbade him ever to appear before her again.

A more experienced lover than the young professor would have made it a point to see Céleste the next day; for in affairs of the heart people are never nearer to an understanding than at the moment they acknowledge the necessity of an eternal separation. But this is not a mathematical formula, and so Félix Phellion believed himself positively banished. During the fortnight granted the girl for reflection—in which she no more thought of la Peyrade than if he had had no interest in the matter—the unfortunate youth never had the remotest thought of breaking the ban. Luckily for this silly lover, a good fairy was on the watch, and the day before Céleste was to make her choice known the following occurred.

It was on Sunday, the day on which the Thuilliers still affected their regular receptions.

To avoid being cheated by her servants, Madame Phellion was in the habit of dealing with her tradesmen in person. From time immemorial, in the Phellions' establishment, Sunday was the day for stewed beef, and the wife of the great citizen, in the costume usually assumed by housewives when they go marketing, was prosaically returning from the butcher's, followed by her cook, who was carrying a fine cut of beef in her basket. She had already rung her door-bell twice, and a terrible storm was gathering over the head of the little servant who, by his delay, was placing his mistress in a far more terrible condition than that of Louis XIV., who was only *almost* kept waiting. In her feverish impatience, Madame Phellion had given the bell a third and tremendous pull. Imagine her confusion and her emotion, when, from a small brougham,

which clattered up to the door of her house, she saw a woman alight, and when in this early and inopportune visitor she recognized the elegant Countess Torna de Godollo. Turning purple, the ill-fated Madame Phellion lost her head, and, confounding herself in excuses, was about to complicate the situation, already false enough, when, attracted by the incessant ringing of the bell, Phellion appeared from his study in dressing-gown and Greek skull-cap. After an eloquent speech, which went far toward compensating for the costume it was intended to excuse, the great citizen, with that serenity that never failed him, gallantly offered his arm to the stranger, and, after seating her in the drawing-room, began—"May one ask Madame, without being indiscreet, what it is that brings us the unexpected pleasure of her visit?"

"I desire," answered the Hungarian, "to talk with Madame Phellion about something which concerns her deeply. I never have an opportunity to see her alone, and therefore, though she scarcely knows me, I have taken the liberty of coming here."

"On the contrary, Madame, this is a signal honor to our humble abode. But where can Madame Phellion be?" added the worthy man impatiently, as he went toward the door.

"No, I beg of you," said the Countess, "do not disturb her. My call was untimely when she was busy with household duties. Brigitte is bringing me up very well, and I know that a housekeeper's cares must be respected. In any case, I can hardly complain, since I have the advantage of your company, which I had not reckoned upon."

Before Phellion had answered this civil phrase, Madame Phellion appeared. A ribboned cap had taken the place of

the marketing hat, and an enormous shawl concealed the other insufficiencies of her morning toilet. Upon his wife's entrance, the great citizen tried to retire discreetly.

"Monsieur Phellion," said the Countess, "you will not be unwelcome in the conversation with Madame. Quite the contrary, your excellent judgment cannot but be useful in throwing light upon a question in which you are no less interested than your amiable wife. I mean your son's marriage."

"My son's marriage?" exclaimed Madame Phellion with an expression of surprise. "But I was not aware that anything of the sort was at this moment being considered."

"A marriage between Monsieur Félix and Céleste," the Countess went on, "is, I believe, one of your desires—if not a definite plan."

"We have taken no steps whatever, Madame," said Phellion, "in that direction."

"I know well enough, however," continued the Hungarian, "in spite of the bad management to which the affair has been subjected, that the young people love each other, and that they will be deserving of pity if they are not united. It is to ward off this disaster that I have come here this morning."

"Madame," said Phellion, "we cannot but be profoundly touched by the interest you are kind enough to express for our son's happiness, but really, this interest—"

"Is so incomprehensible," quickly interrupted the Countess, "that it puts you rather on your guard?"

"Indeed, no, Madame!" said Phellion with a respectful and deprecating bow.

"Dear me," continued the lady, "the explanation is very simple. I have made a study of Céleste, and I have found

that sweet, innocent child to possess such good moral qualities that I should be deeply mortified to see her sacrificed."

"No doubt," said Madame Phellion, "Céleste is an angel of goodness."

"As for Monsieur Félix, I venture to be interested in him, first because he is a worthy son of the most virtuous of father's—"

"You are too kind, Madame!" said Phellion, bowing as before.

"But I also like him for that shyness of true love which speaks from all his actions and all his words. We women find an inexpressible charm in seeing a passion under an aspect which threatens neither disappointment nor deception."

"My son, indeed, is not remarkably distinguished," said Madame Phellion with scarcely perceptible tartness. "He is not a young man of fashion."

"But he has the highest qualities," replied the Countess. "He has merit unconscious of itself, and that is the surest token of intellectual superiority. But another reason which induces me to champion the cause of these young people is that I have no fancy whatever for Monsieur de la Peyrade, who is false and greedy for wealth. This man is trying to build his own fortune on the ruins of their hopes."

"No doubt," said Phellion, "Monsieur de la Peyrade has sombre depths of character where the light may hardly penetrate."

"And as I have had the misfortune of having a husband of just such a character, the mere thought of the torments to which Céleste would be condemned by such a connection inspired me with the charitable impulse which now, perhaps, no longer surprises you."

"There was no necessity," said Phellion, for the dis-

cursive explanations with which you have been justifying your conduct; but as to the errors by which we may have counteracted your generous efforts, I admit that to save us from repeating them it would be a kindness to point them out to us."

"How long is it," asked the Countess, "since any one of your family has been in the Thuilliers' house."

"If my memory serves me right," answered Phellion, "we were there on the Sunday following the housewarming dinner."

"That is to say a full fortnight of continued absence," commented the Hungarian lady. "Do you believe that in a fortnight nothing happens?"

"Yes, much may happen, since three glorious days were sufficient in 1830 to overturn a perjured dynasty, and found the present order of government."

"You see!" said the Countess, "and on that particular evening, did nothing pass between Céleste and your son."

"Yes," answered Phellion, "a very unpleasant debate on the subject of Félix's religious views, for it must be confessed that little Céleste, so charming in every other way, is something of a fanatic on the chapter of religion."

"I grant that; but you know by what mother she has been brought up. She has not been shown the real face of sincere piety, but its grimace. The repentant Magdalens of Madame Colleville's type always pretend an inclination for the desert in the company of a death's head. They like to believe that their salvation cannot be bought at a cheaper price. After all, what did Céleste ask Monsieur Félix to do? To read the 'Imitation of Christ'?"

"He has read it, Madame," answered Phellion. "He found it to be a very well written book, but his convic-

tions, unfortunately, have not been in the least changed by it."

"And do you think it clever of him not to have made some slight concessions to his lady-love?"

"My son has never received lessons in cleverness from me; truthfulness and integrity, those are the principles I have tried to teach him."

"It seems to me, sir, that there is no lack of truthfulness in the avoidance of offending a prejudiced mind. But let us take for granted that Monsieur Félix owed it to himself to be the iron barrier against which all of Céleste's entreaties have broken. Was that a reason, after a scene which was not the first of its kind, and which bore the character of a rupture, to abstain from visiting the Thuilliers' neutral territory, and to keep in his tent for a whole fortnight?"

"I must admit," said Madame Phellion, "that since the day when Céleste seemed to signify to him that all was over between them, my son has behaved in a manner to alarm both Monsieur Phellion and myself."

"What has happened?" asked the Countess, with evident concern.

"The evening of the quarrel," said Phellion, "my son on returning here shed burning tears on his mother's breast, telling us that he thought his happiness was gone for life."

"That," observed Madame de Godollo, "is natural enough; lovers always see the worst side of things."

"No doubt," said Madame Phellion; "but since that time Félix has not made the most distant allusion to his misfortune, and the next day he threw himself into his work with a sort of frenzy. Does that seem natural too?"

"That also is open to explanation: study is said to be a great consoler."

"Very true," said Phellion; "but in Félix's conduct there is something so extravagant and so abstracted, that you would hardly believe it. When you speak to the young man, he does not seem to hear you. He sits down to the table, and forgets to eat, or takes his food in the dreamy manner which medical science looks upon as very bad for the operations of digestion. He has to be reminded of his regular tasks and occupations, when, normally, he is so punctilious. And the other day, while he was at the observatory, where he now spends all his evenings (returning at hours unduly late), I took it upon myself to go into his room, and to look over his papers. I was frightened at finding the copybook full of algebraic calculations which seemed to surpass the powers of the human mind."

"Perhaps," suggested the Countess, "he is on the road to the solution of some great problem."

"Or on the road to madness," said Madame Phellion, sighing, and lowering her voice.

"That is very unlikely," said Madame de Godollo. "With such a calm temperament and such good sense one is not exposed to that. I know of something more dangerous which threatens him to-morrow, if a decisive step is not taken before then: Céleste may be lost to him altogether!"

"How so?" asked both the spouses in the same breath.

"You may not be aware," began the Countess, "that special pledges have been made by Thuillier and his sister on the subject of a match between Céleste and Monsieur de la Peyrade."

"We had some suspicion of it, at least," answered Madame Phellion.

"But the fulfilment of these pledges was dated far in advance, and strictly conditioned. Monsieur de la Peyrade,

after securing the purchase of the house in the Madeleine, was to obtain the Cross of the Legion of Honor for Monsieur Thuillier, write a political pamphlet for him, and lead him to a seat in the Chamber. It was like a romance of chivalry, in which the hero, before winning the hand of the princess, was sentenced to exterminate a dragon. It would take too long, and would be of no immediate purpose, to detail Monsieur de la Peyrade's procedure. But the chief thing for you to know is, that, thanks to his machinations, Céleste has been compelled to choose between himself and Monsieur Félix. The poor child was given a fortnight to reflect and make up her mind. To-morrow the fatal term expires. But, thanks to the unfavorable disposition your son's conduct has produced in her, there is a serious danger of her true sentiments being stifled by the voice of her vexation."

"But what is to be done, Madame?" asked Phellion.

"Fight! Come this evening in a body to the Thuillier's, and make Monsieur Félix come with you. Sermonize him into making his philosophic opinions a little more pliable. Now, Henri IV. said that Paris was worth a Mass. At any rate, let him avoid questions of that kind. Let him find accents in his heart to move the woman who loves him. That will be a great stride toward being thought in the right by her. I shall be there, and shall do all in my power to help him, and perhaps, under the inspiration of the moment, I may invent some means of making my support efficacious. One thing is certain—that to-night we must fight a great battle, and if we do not, all of us, valiantly do our duty, the victory may fall to la Peyrade."

"My son is not here," answered Phellion, "which I regret, as perhaps your kindness and your parting words

might have stirred him from his torpor. However, I shall show him the situation in its full gravity, and he will certainly accompany us to our friends, the Thuilliers, this evening."

"I need hardly say," added the Countess rising, "that you must carefully eschew anything to suggest the idea of collusion. We must have no communications, and unless the reconciliation comes about naturally, we had best not speak to one another."

"You may count, Madame, upon my discretion," answered Phellion, "and I ask you at the same time to accept the assurance of—"

"Your most distinguished consideration!" interrupted the Countess, laughing.

"No, Madame," heartily answered Phellion, "I have reserved that figure of speech for ending letters with. But I would like you to believe in my warm and unalterable gratitude."

"We will talk about that after we are out of danger," said Madame de Godollo, as she went to the door, "and if Madame, the most loving and virtuous of mothers and wives, will give me a little place in her friendship, I shall be more than repaid for my trouble."

Madame Phellion began an immeasurable compliment. The Countess had already gone some distance in her carriage, when Phellion was still following her with the most obsequious salutations.

In the measure that the element of the Latin Quarter diminished its visits to Brigitte's new house, a more vital stream of Paris life filtered in. For among his colleagues of the municipal council and the higher clerks of the prefecture, Thuillier had enlisted some important recruits.

The mayor and his deputies in the district on whom the councillor had called, upon settling in the district, had hastened to return his civility, and also a few officers of the First Legion. The house itself had contributed its contingent, and some of the new tenants aided in the reorganization of the Sunday evening parties by their presence. Among them must be mentioned Rabourdin, formerly the chief of Thuillier's division in the Finance Department. Having lost his wife, whose social gatherings had once rivalled Madame Colleville's, Rabourdin was now occupying bachelor quarters on the third floor over the apartment leased to Cardot, the honorary notary. As a consequence of being passed over through favoritism, he had voluntarily resigned from the public service. At the time he met Thuillier again, he was a director of one of those numerous railways under projection; whose completion suffered constant postponement through parliamentary delays and partisanship. Let us observe, in passing, that meeting with this clever administrator, who had become an important figure in the financial world, afforded the worthy and honest Phellion another occasion to show his splendid character. At the time of Rabourdin's retirement, to which he had felt forced, of all the clerks in the office Phellion had been the only one to take his side. Rabourdin, now in a position to dispose of a number of places, when he found his faithful knight again, at once offered him an easy and lucrative post.

"Sir," Phellion replied, "your kindness touches and honors me, but my sincerity owes you a confession which I beg you not to take in bad part. I do not believe in iron roads or railways, as the English call them."

"An opinion, as good as any other," said Rabourdin

smiling, "but in the meantime, we are paying our clerks very well, and I would be glad to employ you in that capacity. I know by experience that you are a man upon whom reliance can be placed."

"Sir," answered the great citizen again, "I did my duty then and nothing more. As for your generous offer, I feel unable to accept it; content with my humble lot, I experience neither the desire nor the need to embark on a new career."

Most of the new guests invited by Thuillier were ignorant of his sister's supremacy in the household. On arriving, therefore, they requested Thuillier to present them to Madame, and Thuillier could not of course tell them that his wife was a figurehead groaning under the iron hand of a Richelieu from whom sprung all authority. It was only after their first homage rendered to the wife of the sovereign, that the new-comers were taken to Brigitte, who, through anger at this dethronement from power, received them so rudely that they were but little encouraged to go out of their way to show her civility. Conscious of this species of decline, Queen Elizabeth said to herself, with that profound instinct of domination which was her ruling passion—"If I do not take care, I shall soon count for nothing here." And dwelling upon this idea, she at last came to think that in the event of la Peyrade, as Céleste's husband, taking a place in the household, the situation, which already was beginning to displease and disquiet her, could not but complicate itself. Thenceforth, as if by a sudden intuition, Félix Phellion, a good young man, too much absorbed in his mathematics ever to become a formidable rival to her sovereignty, appeared to her a far more suitable match than the enterprising barrister, and she was therefore the first

to be disturbed at the absence of their son, when she saw the Phellion couple arrive without him.

As for Madame de Godollo, who in spite of her very unusual voice had refused to sing, when she saw what little attention had been paid to her advice, requested Madame Phellion to be good enough to accompany her, and between two verses of a fashionable ballad asked her—"Well, and what about your son?"

"He is coming," answered Madame Phellion, "his father lectured him roundly, but to-night there is a conjunction of some planets—I do not know which. It is a great occasion at the observatory, and he was obliged to go—"

"How can one be so inconceivably ill advised?" said the Countess. "There was not enough theology in this affair so astronomy had to be dragged in." And irritation imparting more vigor to her performance, she finished the ballad among what the English call "thunders of applause."

La Peyrade, who feared her excessively, was not one of the last, after she had gone back to her place, to come up and express his admiration; but she received his compliments with a coolness that bordered upon incivility, and this gave a yet keener edge to their enmity. He then went to console himself with Madame Colleville. Flavie had too many pretensions to beauty left not to hate a woman qualified to capture so many suffrages.

"Do you too think that woman sings well?" Madame Colleville disdainfully asked the lawyer.

"I have been telling her so, at least," answered la Peyrade, "since there is no salvation without her, when it comes to standing well in Brigitte's favor. But look at your little Céleste; she never takes her eyes off the door,

and whenever a tray is brought in, although it is too late for another visitor, her face shows evident signs of disappointment."

It may be noted that since the reign of Madame de Godollo trays were handed about in the drawing-room on reception days—and that without stint—loaded with ices and little cakes and syrups, bought at Tanrade's, the best place.

"Oh, leave me alone!" said Flavie. "I know very well what that little idiot is thinking about, and your marriage is all the more certain."

"But am I doing it for myself?" said la Peyrade. "Is it not a necessity I am submitting to for the sake of the future prosperity of us all? Tears in your eyes? Come, come! How unreasonable! The devil! who wants the ends wants the means, as that old prig of a Phellion says!" And leaving her, he drew near to the group formed by Céleste, Madame Thuillier, Madame de Godollo, Colleville and Phellion. Madame Colleville followed him, and lashed to unmotherly ferocity by the sentiment of jealousy, she said—"Céleste, why do you not sing? Several of these gentlemen wish to hear you."

"Oh, mamma," said Céleste, "how can I sing after Madame, with my poor shred of a voice? Besides, you know I have a slight cold."

"Which means that you are capricious and disagreeable, as usual. People sing as they can, and every voice has its good qualities."

"My dear friend," said Colleville, who, having just lost twenty francs at one of the card tables, was in sufficiently bad humor to venture opposition to his wife, "people sing as they can—that is a Philistine precept. You sing with your voice if you have one, but you never sing after an

operatic voice, like the Countess's, has been heard. For my part, I am quite willing to excuse Céleste from cooing one of her little languid airs."

"It is hardly worth while," said Flavie, leaving the group, "to pay such expensive masters for nothing!"

"So," said Colleville to Phellion, resuming the conversation which Madame Colleville's invasion had interrupted, "Félix has ceased to inhabit the earth, and spends his time in the stars?"

"My dear old friend," said Phellion, "I am like yourself much provoked with my son, at seeing him thus neglect the oldest friends of his family, and although the contemplation of those great luminous bodies, suspended in space by the Creator's hand, in my opinion presents matters of greater interest than your brain seems to conceive, I think that if Félix breaks his promise to come here this evening he will be guilty of a serious breach of politeness. I shall not spare him, I promise you that."

"Science," observed la Peyrade, "is a fine thing, but, unfortunately, it makes bears and maniacs of people."

"To say nothing of the fact," said Céleste, "that it does away with all religious ideas."

"There, my child, you are wrong," remarked the Countess. "Pascal, who himself was an example of the falseness of your point of view, said, if I am not mistaken, that a little science takes us away from religion, but a great deal takes us back to it."

"However, Madame," said Céleste, "everybody agrees that Monsieur Félix is very learned. When he was giving my brother lessons there was nothing, François used to say, so clear or intelligible as his explanations, and you see that he is none the more religious for that."

"I tell you, my dear, that Monsieur Félix is not irreligious, and that with a little kindness and patience nothing would be easier than to bring him back to the fold."

"Bring a man of science back to the fold! That seems difficult to me," said la Peyrade. "Those gentlemen put their studies above everything else. Tell a geometrician, for instance, or a geologist, that the Church imperatively orders the keeping of the Sabbath by the cessation of all kinds of work, and they will only shrug their shoulders, although God Almighty did not disdain to rest."

"It is quite true," agreed Céleste innocently, "that in not coming this evening Monsieur Félix is not only erring against the rules of politeness, but he is committing a sin."

"But tell me, my dear young lady," went on Madame de Godollo, "do you think that to see us assembled here for the purpose of singing ballads, eating ices, and slandering one another, as too often happens in drawing-rooms, is more pleasing to God than to see a student in his observatory, occupied in examining the glorious secrets of creation?"

"There is a time for everything," answered Céleste; "and, as Monsieur de la Peyrade said, 'God Himself did not disdain to rest.'"

"But, my dear," said Madame de Godollo, "God had time to rest; He is eternal."

"That," said la Peyrade, "is one of the prettiest and wittiest specimens of impiety I have ever heard, and such reasons pass for current coin among worldlings. The commandments of the Lord are interpreted arbitrarily, even when they are most positive and explicit; they take what they want and they leave what they want, and they draw their distinctions. Free-thinkers submit everything to their

own omniscience, and we know that from free thought to a free life it is not a long step."

"However, this morning," the Countess went on, "I had the honor of being received by Father Anselme. Not only is this good man a model of all the Christian virtues, but he has the reputation of being a profound mathematician."

"I did not say that the two qualifications were irreconcilable in the same individual."

"But you did say that a good Christian could attend to no sort of work upon a Sunday, so that Father Anselme must be a sad miscreant. As I entered his room I found him before a large blackboard, chalk in hand, and engaged in the solution of a difficult problem. The blackboard was three-quarters covered with algebraic signs, and, I may add, that he did not seem to think he was exciting scandal, since a person whom I am not at liberty to name, but who has given great promise in the field of science, was sharing in this profane study."

"Then you know several men of learning?" asked Céleste; "for this one and Monsieur Phellion already make two."

"You are a curious little body," said the Countess; "but you will not make me tell what I do not want to, as your mind would at once go off at a gallop."

The gallop had already begun, and every word of the Countess appeared to increase the girl's perturbation.

"I should not be in the least surprised," said la Peyrade ironically, "if Father Anselme's assistant was Monsieur Félix Phellion himself. Voltaire kept on good terms with the Jesuits who had brought him up, but he did not talk religion with them."

"Well, my young doctor of science talks freely with his

senior, and lays his doubts before him, and it was thus that their scientific friendship began."

"And does Father Anselme," asked Céleste, "hope to convert this young man?"

"He is sure of doing so. The young man, apart from his deficient religious education, has been brought up in the best principles, and, besides that, knows that his return to the Church would make a charming young girl happy, who loves him and whom he loves. Now, my dear child, I am going to say no more, and you may believe what you please."

"Oh, godmother!" exclaimed Céleste, giving way to her feelings, "what if it were himself!" And she threw herself, in tears, into Madame Thuillier's arms.

At this moment, the footman opened the door of the drawing-room, and by a singular coincidence announced Monsieur Félix Phellion. The schoolmaster arrived in a state of violent perspiration, his necktie in disorder; he was quite out of breath.

"A nice hour," scolded Phellion, "to pay a visit!"

"Father," Félix excused himself as he stepped in the direction where Madame Thuillier and Céleste were sitting, "I could not leave until the phenomenon was over; I found no cab, and ran all the way."

After hearing some reproaches about the infrequency of his visits, and being forgiven by the gracious amnesty, "Better late than never," he turned again to his pole star, and was not a little surprised by Madame de Godollo's remark: "Monsieur, you will forgive a slight indiscretion which I was drawn into in the heat of conversation regarding yourself. I told these ladies, in spite of your request to the contrary, where I met you this morning."

"Or where I had the honor of meeting you," said Félix, "without seeing you."

A hardly perceptible smile flitted on la Peyrade's lips.

"You saw enough of me to speak to me, and entreat me to observe entire secrecy. However, I have not compromised you beyond the truth: I said that you sometimes saw Father Anselme, and your connection with him has hitherto been restricted to scientific research, but that you defend your doubts against him just as you do against Céleste."

"Father Anselme?" asked Félix blankly.

"Yes, of course," said la Peyrade; "the great mathematician who intends to convert you. Mademoiselle Céleste wept for joy over the news."

Félix looked utterly bewildered. Madame de Godollo spoke to him with her eyes in a language that a poodle dog would have understood.

"I wish," added young Phellion, "I had anything so agreeable to tell Mademoiselle Céleste; but I think, Madame, you must be mistaken."

"Listen, sir. I will speak very plainly, and if your false shame makes you conceal a step about which there is nothing blameworthy, since it rejoices those who love you, then you may disavow my statement."

Madame Thuillier and Céleste were a sight in themselves; never were doubt and expectation more forcibly expressed on human faces.

Weighing each one of her words, the Countess said: "I told these ladies, because I knew to what degree they were concerned in your welfare, and because you were accused of wickedly disobeying the Lord's commandment not to work on Sundays—I told them I had met you this morning at a

house in the Rue des Postes, at Father Anselme's, a man of learning like yourself, and with whom you were engaged in the solution of a mathematical problem. I told them that your scientific relationship with this good and enlightened man had led to other discussions between you, that you had mentioned your religious doubts to him, and that he did not despair of overcoming them. In confirming this, there is nothing to humiliate your pride. You were simply preparing a surprise for Céleste, and I was clumsy enough to prematurely ventilate your secret. But only tell her that I spoke the truth, and you will bestow the happiness on her she has been waiting for so long."

"Come, sir," said la Peyrade, "there can be nothing derogatory in looking for light. You, such an upright man, and such an enemy of falsehood, cannot deny what Madame states with such positiveness."

"Mademoiselle Céleste," said Félix after a moment's hesitation, "will you allow me to speak a few words to you in private?"

At an approving sign from Madame Thuillier, Céleste got up. Félix took her by the hand, and drew her into the recess of a window near by.

"Céleste, I beseech you to wait a little longer. Look," he added, pointing to a constellation in the sky, "beyond those visible stars another life awaits us all. As for the story about Father Anselme, I cannot acknowledge it, because it is not true. It is a kind invention. But be patient, and you will hear of things—"

Here Céleste left him, and he remained gazing at the heavens.

"He is mad!" said the young girl, in accents of despair, when she went back to her place at Madame Thuillier's side.

And Félix confirmed this diagnosis by rushing out of the room without noticing how excitedly his father and mother followed him. While the company was lost in amazement over this sudden exit, la Peyrade respectfully addressed Madame de Godollo: "You must admit, Madame, that it is very difficult to pull a man out of the water who insists on drowning—"

"I had not conceived the possibility of such utter stupidity; it was almost too absurd to be true. I now go over to the enemy, and will render to the enemy, at the date of his own choosing, a full and free explanation."

The next day Théodose was afflicted with complex curiosity. How would Céleste decide between the alternatives offered? What had this Countess de Godollo to tell him, and what did she want of him? The first of these questions seemed entitled to precedence; yet, nevertheless, la Peyrade felt instinctively drawn toward the investigation of the second. But when he decided to go to the Countess first, he understood that for the interview to which she had summoned him he must be completely armed.

Rain had fallen in the morning, and the great calculator of destinies did not need to be told that a splash staining the varnish on a boot may bring a man discomfiture. He sent the porter for a cab, and about three in the afternoon started from the Rue Saint-Dominique-d'Enfer for the fashionable latitudes of the Madeleine district. It may well be imagined that he had bestowed much care upon his dress, which had to be balanced between informal morning clothes and the elaborate after-dinner costume. Professionally wedded to the white cravat, which he rarely dispensed with, and not venturing to present himself otherwise than in a tail coat, he felt himself sliding toward one of the very

extremes which he desired to avoid. But by buttoning his tail coat, and substituting for his straw-colored gloves a darker pair, he called a truce to ceremony, and at the same time escaped the provincial appearance of evening dress worn before sunset. Our wily diplomat was careful not to be taken as far as the door of the house. He would not have liked to be seen from the first floor getting out of a hired vehicle; and from the second, he would have feared himself suspected of a visit to the floor below, which would have led to endless comments. He therefore took the precaution of stopping at the corner of the Rue Royale, whence he cautiously tip-toed to his destination on the pavement, now nearly dry. Arrived at the house, he was luckily not seen by the porter and his wife, who were both absent, so that he was able to reach the door of the sanctuary unobserved. A gentle pull at a tasselled silk bell rope made a bell ring inside the apartment. A few seconds elapsed, when a more vigorous pull at another, but smaller, bell announced the fact to him that the maid was too slow in going to the door, in her mistress's opinion. Another moment, and it was opened by a maidservant of mature age, and too substantial to wear the costume of the chambermaid in the play.

The lawyer gave his name, and was requested to wait in a dining-room furnished with chaste luxury. Almost immediately, the servant came back for him, and, announcing his name, ushered him into the daintiest and prettiest of drawing-rooms.

The divinity of the place was seated before a table covered with a cloth of Venetian design, where gold threads glittered among the bright colors of finely embroidered figures. As the barrister entered, she bowed without rising,

and as the servant gave him a chair, said: "Will you allow me to finish an important letter, Monsieur?"

La Peyrade bowed, in token of assent. The lovely foreigner then took from a desk inlaid with tortoise-shell a sheet of sky-blue English note paper, which she put into an envelope, and after penning the address rang a bell. The maid answered at once, and lighted a delicately embossed spirit lamp, one of the desk utensils. Over the lamp hung a sort of enamelled crucible containing a wafer of perfumed sealing wax. As soon as the heat had liquefied the wax, the maid poured it upon the envelope, while she handed her mistress an armorial seal. The lady stamped the wax with her fair hands, and said—"Have this taken to its address without delay."

The servant inadvertently let the note drop, and as he picked it up, la Peyrade caught a glimpse of the address, which read, To His Excellency, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, with the word *Private* in the upper left-hand corner.

"I beg your pardon!" said the Countess as she took the letter from the barrister's hand, who had been wise enough to give it back to its mistress, in order to show his civility. "Be good enough not to lose it," she added in a harsh tone to the awkward maidservant, whom dismissing, the beautiful Hungarian left the chair before the writing table, and went over to take a seat on a pearl-gray satin sofa.

During these little manipulations, la Peyrade had amused himself by taking an inventory of the surrounding splendors. Paintings by great masters stood out from dull, dark hangings, enlivened by silk fringes and galloon. On a bracket of gilded wood stood an enormous Japanese vase. In front of the windows were two flower stands, in each of which a red lily, with its hooked petals, towered over white

and red camellias and dwarfish Chinese magnolia blossoms, creamy white with poppy-colored border. In a nook hung a panoply of arms of the strangest and richest kind, characterizing the nationality of the mistress, who bore a touch of the hussar. Some bronzes and statuettes of exquisite taste, and chairs (which rolled smoothly on a Turkish carpet) showing a very anarchy of designs and materials, completed the furniture of this room, which the barrister had had occasion to visit with Thuillier before it was ever inhabited. He thought it transfigured beyond the point of recognition.

With a little more knowledge of the world, the barrister would not have been surprised at the pains the Countess had lavished upon the decoration of this retreat. A woman's drawing-room is her kingdom. And it is an absolute monarchy, for it is there that she reigns and governs in the full sense of the word; it is there that she often gives battle, and nearly always she issues forth victorious. Has she not, indeed, selected all the ornaments of her drawing-room, and grouped all the colors, and has she not lighted it according to her judgment? If she is an intelligent stage manager, she will appear to the best advantage amid scenery arranged by her own hands, and every one of her charms will be thrown into rare relief. Acknowledge that you do not know all the perfections of a woman, before you have seen her in the prismatic atmosphere of her drawing-room; but beware, also, of judging and appraising her, if you have seen her there only! The Countess was coquettishly lounging in a corner of the sofa; her head listlessly resting on an arm whose white outline the eye could have followed almost to the elbow, under the wide drooping sleeve of a black-velvet dressing-gown. Her fairy foot nestling in a tiny Russian-leather slipper, which rested on a cushion of orange satin

stamped with flowers, the lovely Hungarian looked like a portrait by Lawrence or Winterhalter, with the added charm of an artless pose.

"Monsieur," said she, smiling, and with a slight foreign accent that lent her speech stronger attraction, "I can only be pleased at being called an enemy by a man of your cleverness and penetration."

"But, Madame," answered la Peyrade with mingled astonishment and distrust in his eyes, "all appearances, you will agree, were eloquent on my behalf. A rival crosses my path as I am moving toward a marriage offering itself to me as suitable in every respect. This rival is kind enough to behave with miraculous stupidity, and to be in no wise formidable, and, lo and behold, the most charming and unexpected ally comes to aid him at his most vulnerable spot—"

"You must allow," laughed the Countess, "that he is a brilliant young gentleman, and that he nobly seconded my efforts!"

"I presume that you may have foreseen his stupidity, and thus the support you honored him with was all the more mortifying to me."

"Would it be such a very great misfortune," said the foreigner, with pretty affectation, "if you were dispensed from marrying Mademoiselle Céleste? Are you really so deeply infatuated with that little schoolgirl?"

In this one word, and especially in its intonation, there lay more than contempt, for there was expressed hatred. The tone of voice could not escape such an observer as la Peyrade. As, however, he was not the man to jump at a mere remark—"Madame," said he, "the common phrase 'To settle a thing' sums up a situation in which after long

strife and vanished illusions a man compromises, as best he may, with the future. Now, when this 'settlement' appears in the shape of a young girl with more virtue, to be sure, than beauty, but bringing her husband the fortune indispensable to conjugal happiness and welfare, why should not the heart be grateful, and accept the prospect of the peaceful happiness proffered?"

"It has always been my belief," replied the Countess, "that a man's intelligence is the measure of his ambition, and I supposed that a man shrewd enough to begin as the advocate of the poor entertained less humble and less idyllic aspirations."

"Ah, you see the iron hand of necessity compels us to strange forms of abnegation; before the question of daily bread every other yields and gives way. Was not Apollo obliged to become Admetus's shepherd *for a living?*"

"But Admetus's flock," objected Madame de Godollo, "was at least a royal one. Certainly, Apollo would not have consented to act as shepherd for a—member of the middle class."

The pause before her last words seemed to imply the idea of a proper name, and la Peyrade understood that from pure clemency Thuillier had been excused from figuring in an argument which had been limited to the species instead of including the individual.

"I believe," said la Peyrade, "there is as much truth as subtlety in your distinction, but in this case it does not depend upon Apollo."

"I do not like people who overrate themselves," said the Countess curtly, "but I like people even less who sell their wares under current value; on the part of such I always fear some deep and complicated piece of rascality.

You are well aware of your own merits, Monsieur, and your hypocritical humility is detestable; it proves that my well-meant overtures have not even led to the beginnings of mutual confidence."

"I assure you that, up to now, I have had no reason to believe in any alarming superiority of mine."

"Indeed," said the Hungarian, "the modesty of the man is evident who is ready to take refuge behind the pitiful fate I am trying to rescue him from."

"No less evident, perhaps," cleverly rejoined la Peyrade, "than the reality of the benevolence which, to save me, has been severely chastising me."

The lady cast a reproachful look at her interlocutor. Her fingers playing with one of the ribbons on her gown, she lowered her eyes, and breathed a sigh so light and imperceptible that it might have passed for a regular incident of her respiration.

"You are revengeful," she said, "and judge all people alike. After all," she added, as if upon reflection, "you are perhaps right in reminding me that I went by a roundabout way to interfere rather absurdly in matters that are no business of mine. Pursue this glorious marriage which you find so suitable in every respect, and let me hope that you will never have cause to repent of a victory which I will no longer seek to postpone."

The Provençal had not been spoiled by the ladies. The sort of poverty with which he had for a long time struggled does not throw gallant adventures in a man's way, and since shaking off its bony embrace and entirely giving himself over to the laborious task of building up his prospects, excepting the comedy with Madame Colleville, he had paid little heed to the sentimental wants of his heart. The

perplexity of this novice in that department may therefore readily be conceived when he found himself wavering between the fear of allowing a delightful opportunity to escape and of discovering a snake under the flowers which seemed put into his hands. A too marked reserve or a too cold politeness might wound the lovely stranger's pride, and suddenly dry up the fount at which he appeared to have been asked to drink. But what if, on the other hand, this apparent kindness was a snare? What if her interest, whose object he had so suddenly become, and which was so inexplicable to him, solely aimed at luring him to some false step, afterward to be used as a weapon to compromise him in the sight of the Thuilliers?

"Madame," therefore said the barrister guardedly, "I am in great perplexity. I had cheerfully made up my mind to this marriage, and you destroy my faith in it; but if I break it off, what employment is there in prospect for my then liberated talents?"

"La Bruyère said, if I am not mistaken, that nothing cleanses the system like an act of folly avoided."

"Granted. However, that is a negative advantage, and I am old enough and ambitious enough to look for more substantial results. The interest you bear me surely does not stop at making a blank of my mind. I love Mademoiselle Colleville, not with an imperious and consuming passion, it is true, yet still I love her. Her hand is promised me, and before renouncing—"

"Well, then," the Countess interrupted him, speaking coldly, "let us end the debate. Your match with Mademoiselle Colleville is so far advanced, and she suits you so admirably in so many respects, that you had best marry her. You shall find me in the way no longer."

"But does Mademoiselle Colleville really suit me?" the barrister began again. "You have just raised doubts in me on that very point. And do you not think it is rather cruel to throw two contradictory statements at me in succession, without any proof whatever in support of either?"

"Oh!" exclaimed the Countess impatiently, "you seem to insist on documentary evidence! Well, sir, there is one very conclusive argument I can show you—Céleste does not love you."

"I admit," answered Théodose, humbly, "that I am looking forward to a marriage of reason."

"She will never love you, because she never can understand you. Her real husband is that little fair-haired young man, as tame and timid as herself. The union of those two characters, both without life or warmth, will produce the double-harnessed insipidity which, in the eyes of the society she was born and bred in, is the supreme essence of conjugal bliss. Try to make that little fool understand that when money meets talent it is money that is honored! Try to make her odious and wretched surroundings understand that! Middle class upstarts! Among such do you aspire to rest from your long labors and severe trials! And do you think your gifts, weighed in the balance against their wealth, will not always be found outrageously light? If on one side you put the 'Iliad,' the 'Cid,' the 'Freyschütz,' and the Vatican frescoes, and on the other a hundred thousand crowns in good, ringing cash, which side, tell me, will they turn to? Do you know to whom I compare the man of imagination thrown into a middle class atmosphere? To Daniel in the lions' den—without the scriptural miracle!"

This tirade against the middle class was declaimed with

such vigorous conviction that it could hardly fail of its incendiary intention.

"How eloquently," exclaimed Théodose, "you express things which have often harassed my soul! But I have always felt bound by that cruel fatality, the need of a position—"

"Need! Position!" broke in Madame de Godollo, her speech waxing hotter. "Words without sense or sound to men of ability, but which frighten fools as though they meant formidable things! Necessity! Is there such a thing for great men, for those who can say 'I will'? A Gascon minister said something that ought to be engraved over the door of every man's career: 'Everything comes to him who waits.' Can you possibly be unaware that to a man of fine mettle marriage is either a chain which fetters him to vulgarity and degradation or else a pair of wings which carries him to the mountain tops of society? The woman for you, sir, is one who can sympathize with you, because she understands you; one who would help you in your work—an intelligent adviser, not a walking kitchen pot; one who could act as your secretary to-day, and figure creditably as a deputy's or ambassador's wife to morrow; one, in short, who would give you her heart for a sanctuary, her drawing-room for a stage, her connections for a ladder, and who, in exchange for all the inspiration and strength she blessed you with, would ask no more than to reflect the glory and the greatness of the throne she had built for you!"

Intoxicated, in a measure, by her own language, the Hungarian was splendid, her eyes sparkling, her nostrils dilated. She seemed to finger the perspectives pictured by her eloquence with trembling hands. For a moment la Peyrade was dazzled by this gorgeous sunrise that burst

upon his life. Nevertheless, being a man most unusually circumspect, whose rule it was not to loan excepting on good, tangible security, he was impelled to examine the ground yet a little further.

"Madame," said he, "you were just now reproving me for talking like a Philistine, and I—I very much fear you have been talking like a goddess. I admire you, I listen to you, but I am not convinced. Such devotion, such sublime self-sacrifice as you describe, are perhaps to be found in heaven. But who may boast of having met with it here on earth?"

"You are wrong, sir," said the Countess solemnly. "Such devotion is rare, but neither incredible nor impossible. You must only have the faculty of discovering it, and then of keeping it, when once found."

Upon which she rose majestically.

La Peyrade thought he had ended by giving offence, and was now being dismissed. He also rose, bowed respectfully, and asked the privilege of an occasional visit.

"Monsieur," answered Madame de Godollo, "with us Hungarians, who are a primitive people, and almost savages, when the door is open, it is wide open, but when it is shut, it is double-bolted."

This dignified and ambiguous remark was accompanied by a slight bow. Abashed and bewildered by this sort of behavior and speech, so new to him, and so unlike that of Flavie, and Brigitte, and Madame Minard, la Peyrade went out, asking himself if he had played the game well. He walked the streets for some time without definite purpose, but not without useful meditation. He concluded that he must gain time by voluntarily offering Céleste's relatives a further respite for the girl to come to a decision, and that

he must humor Thuillier by finishing his political "work." He accordingly, as soon as he reached his abode, wrote to his "dear friend" to that effect.

Four days later, the printer and the stitcher having done their office, Thuillier was able to afford himself the inexpressible pleasure of promenading the boulevards and arcades until he got to the Palais-Royal. He stopped at every bookseller's window where he saw the glorious title, in large letters, on a yellow placard—

ON TAXATION AND REDEMPTION

By J. Thuillier

Of the General Council of the Seine!

Of those publishers who were not announcing the great "novelty," which, in the author's opinion, would startle all Europe, Thuillier thought slightly. Without quite knowing how to punish their neglect, he took note of these rebel institutions, vowing them as much evil as though he had received a personal affront.

The next day he spent delightfully in writing a number of letters, to go with the presentation copies, marked in his own valuable handwriting, "With the author's compliments." But the third day of sale brought his felicity to a standstill. He had selected as his publisher a young man who had gone into bookselling on a reckless scale, and who had lately established himself in the Panorama arcade, where he paid a ruinous rental. A nephew of Barbet, the bookseller who was Brigitte's tenant in the Rue Saint-Dominique-d'Enfer, and whose notes she was in the habit of discounting, this Barbet junior was a youth without prepossessions, and when he was presented to Thuillier by

his uncle, he pledged himself—with the proviso of not being stinted as to advertisements—to create a demand for a second edition in a week. Now, Thuillier had spent nearly fifteen hundred francs on paid advertising; copies galore had been sent to the newspaper offices, and the total issue had amounted, in three days, to seven copies, and three of them sold at credit at that. It might have been supposed that having to announce such mean results would have diminished the young publisher's self-assurance. On the contrary, however, this Guzman of a bookseller addressed himself to his client in the following terms: "I am charmed," said he, "with what has happened. If we had sold a hundred copies, I should feel uneasy about the fifteen hundred we have printed. I should call that missing fire, instead of which this very insignificant sale shows me that the whole edition will go off with a rush."

"But when?" asked Thuillier, to whom this point of view appeared somewhat paradoxical.

"Why," answered Barbet, "when we have articles in all the papers! Advertisements only serve to attract the attention of the public. A man says to himself: 'Here is a new publication that may be interesting. On "Taxation and Redemption"—a fine title!' But the finer the title, the more the people are superstitious about the contents; they have been caught so often! So they wait for the newspaper articles, instead of which, in the case of a book destined to have a very moderate sale, there are always a hundred purchasers ready made, and after them—well, that's the end!"

"Then," said Thuillier, "you are hopeful about the sale?"

"Quite so; I look upon it as very promising. When the

'Débats,' the 'Constitutionnel,' the 'Siècle,' and the 'Presse' have had their say, and especially when you have been slated by the 'Journal des Débats,' which is a ministerial sheet, it will only be a matter of a few days, and then the whole edition will be taken up."

"It is very easy to talk," answered Thuillier, "but how does one reach all these gentlemen of the press?"

"Oh, I will attend to that," said young Barbet. "I am on the best of terms with all the editors-in-chief; they say I am a devil of a fellow, and that I remind them of Ladvocat in his palmiest days."

"Well, then, my good man, you ought to have seen them already."

"Oh, allow me, Papa Thuillier, there is a certain way of approaching journalists, and as you have already demurred at the fifteen hundred francs which the advertising cost you, I have not ventured to suggest another expenditure."

"But why should there be another expenditure?" asked Thuillier, showing some anxiety.

"When you were nominated member of the general council," resumed the bookseller, "where was your election plotted?"

"In my own house, of course!"

"In your own house, as you say, but at a dinner followed by a ball, the said ball being concluded by a supper."

"So you think I ought to give a journalists' dinner."

"Yes, but not at your own house, because journalists, you see, are bored by women; they have to behave properly! And then it is not a dinner we want, but a luncheon. In the evening, those gentlemen have their first performances to go to, and the newspaper has to be made up, to say nothing of their own little affairs, instead of which in the

morning they have nothing to think of. I have always given luncheons."

"But those feasts are expensive! Journalists are always so particular and exacting!"

"Oh, no, twenty francs a head, without wine! Say you have about ten guests, with a hundred crowns you will do the thing very handsomely. A lunch is even preferable from the economic point of view, for a dinner would not cost you less than a five-hundred-franc note."

"How extravagant you are, young man!" said the author.

"Confound it! everybody knows that the deputy's seat is expensive, and you must remember that you are paving the way for your election!"

"But how must I go about it to get these gentlemen? Must I go and invite them myself?"

"Not at all! You have sent your pamphlet, and all you have to do is to ask them to meet you at Véfour's. They will understand perfectly."

"Ten guests," then said Thuillier, beginning to enter into the idea. "There are not as many important newspapers as that."

"Very true," acknowledged the publisher, "but we must ask the mongrels, too, because it is they who bark the loudest. This luncheon will be talked about; they will think you have shown favoritism, and as many as are uninvited so many enemies will you have."

"So that, in your opinion, it will be enough merely to send the invitations?"

"Yes, I will make out a list, you will write the letters and send them to me, and I will undertake to have them delivered; some I will take myself."

Barbet drew up his little list, and instead of ten names,

as he had first stated, he counted up fifteen, without himself and la Peyrade, whom Thuillier wanted as a support on the occasion when he would most likely want assistance. When he had read the list submitted to him, he said—"Look here, my dear fellow, you have put down names of papers that nobody has ever heard of. What are the 'Moralisateur,' the 'Lanterne,' the 'Diogène,' the 'Pélican,' and the 'Echo de la Bièvre'?"

"You will do well," answered Barbet, "not to fall foul of the 'Echo de la Bièvre,' a paper published in the twelfth district, for which you intend to stand. All the important tanners of the Mouffetard precinct subscribe to it."

"Well, let that one pass," said Thuillier. "But what about this 'Pélican'?"

"The 'Pélican'? That is a paper which you will find in the waiting-rooms of all the dentists, who will do more *to puff* you than any one in the world. How many teeth do you think are pulled out every day in Paris, on the average?"

"Oh, never mind that!" exclaimed Thuillier, who, in order to show his authority, scratched off enough names to reduce the total number to fourteen.

"And if one should fail us," said Barbet, "we should be thirteen."

"Pooh!" said the strong-minded Thuillier, "what do I care for such superstitions?"

The lunch party was arranged to take place at Véfour's, the favorite restaurant of middle class people and provincials. Barbet arrived even before Thuillier, who wore a necktie in itself sufficient to be an event in the eyes of his fun-loving guests. The publisher had several items of the bill of fare changed on his own account, and instead of

the champagne being brought on at dessert, in middle class fashion, he ordered that two cold bottles be put on the table at the beginning of the meal, with a few pounds of shrimps, which the host had forgotten.

Thuillier sanctioned all these amendments reluctantly. After he had been there a little while, la Peyrade came. Then there was a decided pause in the arrival of the guests. The lunch was fixed for eleven o'clock, and at a quarter to twelve no one had as yet appeared. Barbet, who was never at a loss for something to say, made the consoling observation that invitations to restaurants were like funerals, where every one knows that eleven o'clock means noon. Indeed, a little before that hour two gentlemen with goatee beards were ushered in, exhaling a strong smell of liquor and tobacco. Thuillier thanked them effusively for the *honor* they were doing him, and then came another deadly pause, the horrors of which we need not describe. At one o'clock, five guests were assembled, Barbet and la Peyrade not included. It is hardly necessary to say that no self-respecting journalist of standing had answered the extraordinary invitation.

There was nothing to do but to sit down to table. A few polite phrases, which were proffered Thuillier on the *stupendous* interest of his treatise, were not enough to counteract the bitterness of this failure, and the party threatened to be as dull and depressing as possible.

When, however, the oysters were eaten, the champagne and the Chablis that washed them down began to have their effect on the mental temperature. But suddenly a terrible and most unexpected shock came to Thuillier at the hands of a young man in a cap, who rushed into the banqueting apartment.

"Master," said the new arrival to Barbet—he was one of

the bookseller's clerks—"we are cooked! The police have come down on us! A sergeant and two men have seized the gentleman's pamphlet, and here is the paper they gave me for you!"

"Look at this, Mister Barrister," said Barbet to la Peyrade, handing him the stamped paper, a little shaken, at last, in his self-confidence.

"A summons to appear before the Court of Assizes, at short notice," said la Peyrade after reading a few lines of the legal scrawl.

"You did not comply with all the formalities?" asked Thuillier of the publisher, in a choking voice and as pale as death.

"Oh, this is not a question of form," answered la Peyrade. "It is a seizure of an offensive publication, inciting to hatred and contempt of the government. You will probably find a duplicate at home, my poor Thuillier."

"Then I have been betrayed!" cried Thuillier, losing his head entirely.

"Well, my dear fellow, you know very well what you have written in your own pamphlet. As for me, I can see nothing in it to hurt a cat!"

"It is a misunderstanding!" said Barbet, picking up courage. "It will all be explained, and the consequence will be a great advertisement for us. Is it not so, gentlemen?"

"Waiter, a pen and ink!" exclaimed one of the journalists thus addressed.

"Oh, you have lots of time to do your article later on," said one of his colleagues. "What has it got to do with this *filet saute*, anyhow?"

This was a parody of a celebrated saying of Charles

XII., King of Sweden, who was interrupted by the explosion of a bomb while dictating a letter to one of his secretaries.

"Gentlemen," said Thuillier, rising, "you must excuse me; if this, as Monsieur Barbet thinks, is all a mistake, it must be cleared up at once. I shall, therefore, with your permission, at once go to the court. La Peyrade," he added in a significant tone, "you will not refuse to go with me. And you, my dear Mister Publisher, will do well to come too."

"By Jove, no!" said Barbet junior. "When I lunch, I lunch! If the court has made a mistake, so much the worse for the court."

"But supposing it is a strong prosecution!" cried Thuillier, in the depths of agony.

"In that case, I shall say the truth, which is that I have not read a word of your pamphlet. There is only one thing to be afraid of: those rascally juries do not like beards. I shall be obliged to cut mine off, if I have to appear before one."

"My dear host, pray sit down," said the editor-in-chief of the "Echo de la Bièvre," "we will back you up! I already have an article which will create a sensation among the turf merchants. That honorable corporation is a power in the land!"

"No, gentlemen," said Thuillier, "no! A man like myself never remains for half an hour under the shadow of such an indictment. Continue your meal without us. I hope to be back soon. Are you coming, la Peyrade?"

"He is delightful," said Barbet, seeing Thuillier and his adviser go. "The idea of leaving a luncheon after the oysters to go and talk with a donkey of a deputy judge!

Come gentlemen, let us close up the ranks!" he added with enthusiasm.

"Hello!" said one of the hungry journalists who was looking into the garden of the Palais Royal, upon which the dining-room fronted, "there is Barbanchu passing by! Shall I ask him up?"

"Yes, of course," exclaimed young Barbet.

"Barbanchu! Barbanchu!" then cried out the reputed journalist.

Barbanchu, with a pointed hat on his head, took some time to find the cloud from whence came the voice.

"Here! here!" called the voice, which he recognized as a celestial one when he saw that he was being hailed by a man with a glass of champagne in his hand. As he still hesitated, he heard a chorus of—"Come up, old fellow, come up! There is lots to eat!"

Thuillier left the court without the vestige of an illusion remaining. A suit of the severest kind was being brought against him, and, from the severity of his reception, he was led to believe that he would be shown no indulgence. And then, as it often happens between accomplices after the shipwreck of their common enterprise, began bitter accusations against la Peyrade. Under the sting of their injustice his resentment grew; but knowing himself to be powerless, and not desiring a rupture, he finally bade Thuillier good-by, saying that he forgave a man in an unnatural state of alarm, and that he would come back in the afternoon to see if he had recovered. In the meanwhile, they might consider what further steps ought to be taken.

At four o'clock, therefore, the Provençal went to the house in the Boulevard Madeleine. Thuillier's anger was appeased, and had given way to a fit of terrible consterna-

tion. Had he been waiting to be taken away to the scaffold in half an hour, he could not have been more completely dejected and unstrung. When the barrister came in, Madame Thuillier was engaged in dosing her husband with a cup of lime-leaf tea. The poor woman had been roused from her usual apathy, and was proving herself a veritable Eponina to this Sabinus. As for Brigitte, who soon appeared on the scene carrying a foot bath, she had nothing but scorn for the barrister. Her unreasonable scolding, out of all proportion to the offence—presuming, always, that one had been committed—would have made the calmest individual lose his balance. La Peyrade felt that he had lost his place with these people, who seemed to rejoice in every opportunity to break faith with him, and to indulge themselves in the most provoking ingratitude. Upon a sarcastic illusion to his method of obtaining medals for his friends—such as the Cross of the Legion—he rose and took his leave without the slightest effort being made to keep him.

Taking a turn in the street, the Provençal in the midst of his indignation had a sudden reminiscence of Madame de Godollo, and, to speak truth, his thoughts had often been with the fair foreigner since their first interview. More than once, when she was at the Thuilliers', had she adjourned the session upon his appearance there, and this manœuvre was repeated whenever they met. Without getting to the bottom of it, la Peyrade told himself that this exhibition of fleeing him signified something else than indifference. To return at once to the Countess after the first visit would have been inopportune, but now a sufficient term had elapsed to make it plain that he was a man with entire control over himself. He therefore retraced his steps, and without asking the porter if the lady was at home, act-

ing as though he were on his way back to the Thuilliers', he rang the bell on the first floor.

He found evidence of pain in the lovely stranger's face, which did not at all detract from her seductiveness. On the sofa where she was sitting, there lay open beside her a letter on gilt-edge paper, written in the large legible hand indicating official origin from some minister's study or some legation. In her hand was a cut-glass smelling bottle, with a chased gold stopper, and a strong odor of scented vinegar permeated the apartment.

"Are you ill, Madame?" asked la Peyrade solicitously.

"Oh, no, it is nothing," said the stranger, "merely one of my headaches, to which I am subject. But you, Monsieur, where have you been? I was beginning to lose hope of ever seeing you again. Is it some great piece of news that you have come to tell me? Your marriage with Mademoiselle Colleville is now near enough to be the subject of a communication?"

This beginning somewhat disconcerted la Peyrade.

"You seem to be," he answered in an almost rude tone, "well enough informed about what passes in the Thuillier establishment to know that nothing of the kind is arranged or, I may even say, probable."

"No, I assure you, I know nothing. I have altogether stopped manifesting any interest in that affair, which I ought never to have meddled with. I talk about everything with Mademoiselle Brigitte, excepting Céleste's marriage."

"And it is no doubt the desire to leave me free to discuss that subject which puts you to flight, whenever I have the honor of meeting you in our friends' house."

"Of course," said the Countess, "that must be the reason

why I resigned the field to you. What other motive could there be?"

"Oh, there are very many motives for avoiding a man. For instance, if he has given displeasure, or if advice which has been given him very kindly has not been given the respectful consideration it deserved."

"Oh, my dear sir, I am not such an ardent proselytizer as to be offended when people do not take my advice! I am just as liable to have taken a wrong view as any one else."

"Quite the contrary, in the matter of my marriage, your point of view was quite right."

"What?" said the Countess, "did the seizure of the pamphlet, coming after the vainly expected Cross, bring about a rupture?"

"No," answered the barrister, "my influence with the Thuilliers rests on a more solid foundation, and on account of services I have rendered Mademoiselle Brigitte and her brother, these two misfortunes are happily to be mended—"

"Do you think so?" the Countess interrupted him with an incredulous look.

"Of course," answered Théodose, "if the Countess de Bruel takes it into her head to secure the red ribbon, in spite of the hindrances opposing her kind intentions, she will undoubtedly succeed in a feat which, after all, is not superhuman."

The Countess smiled at this remark and shook her head.

"But it was only a few days ago, Madame, that the Countess de Bruel was telling Madame Colleville how she was nettled by the unforeseen check, and how she was going to see the minister in person."

"But you must not forget that since then there has been

a judicial seizure, and that it is not customary to wait for a man to be called before the Court of Assizes, to confer a medal upon him. This seziure, you may not have observed, argues against Monsieur, and perhaps against yourself—as you are the real culprit—malicious intent, to a stronger degree than you imagine. On this occasion the court does not seem to have taken the initiative itself."

"I admit," he said, after a hasty glance at the Countess, "that I have vainly tried to discover in the incriminated document anything to warrant this attack."

"It is my opinion, too, that his Majesty's servants must have drawn largely upon their imagination, in order to reach the conviction that a seditious work was in their hands, but this is all the better proof of the powerful underground influence at work in perverting all your intentions on behalf of our excellent Monsieur Thuillier."

"Our secret enemies," said la Peyrade, "do you know them?"

"Perhaps," smiled the Countess again.

"Madame," said la Peyrade, "might I venture a suspicion?"

"Say on," answered Madame de Godollo, "I will not be angry with you for guessing."

"Well, then, our enemies, that is Thuillier's and mine, are a woman."

"Let us assume it to be so. Do you know how many lines of a man's handwriting Richelieu required to hang him?"

"Four," answered la Peyrade.

"Then you will understand that a pamphlet of two hundred pages may have furnished a woman of—perspicacity—matter enough for a prosecution."

"I see everything!" cried la Peyrade excitedly. "I think the woman is one in a hundred, that she is as cunning and clever as Richelieu himself, that—adorable witch that she is—not only does she set justice and the police in motion, but that she can spirit a Cross from the hand of a minister, just as he is in the act of pinning it to a man's breast!"

"In that case," asked the Countess, "what is the use of fighting against her?"

"Oh! I shall fight no more," answered la Peyrade, measuring her regard for him by the kindness of her interests. And with pretended contrition, he added—"I fear, Madame, you must *hate* me very much!"

"Not as much as you might suppose. But, after all, what if I did hate you?"

"Ah, Madame," exclaimed la Peyrade rapturously, "I should be the most fortunate of unfortunates, for your hatred is a thousand times sweeter to me and a thousand times more precious than your indifference!"

Madame de Godollo did not reply. She lowered her eyes, and in a slightly altered tone said—"How can a man of your stoicism care enough about a woman's hatred to attach importance to it?"

"Ah! but I do attach a great deal of importance to it; not because I want to rebel against it, but because I must bless the hand that has vouchsafed to descend so heavily upon me! My fair foe once known and confessed, I should not despair of touching her heart. For never again would I walk in a path that was not hers; never again would I fight under a banner not unfolded by her; all my thoughts would be inspired by her; her will should be mine; the least of her commands should be law to me; in everything

I should be her ally. More than that—her slave! And were she to spurn me with her tiny foot, chastise me with her lovely white hand, I should endure it all joyfully! For all my submission and obedience, I should ask only one favor in return—to kiss the imprint of that foot, and to cover that hand with my tears!"

During this long outpouring of ecstatic emotions, which the anticipation of victory had wrung from the heart of the impressionable Provençal, he had slipped from his chair, and at last was on the floor before the Countess, on one knee, in the conventional theatrical attitude, but which is more frequent in real life than one would imagine.

"Get up," said the Countess, "and answer me." Then, fixing a searching glance at him, from under her handsome knitted brows, "Have you fully weighed the import of the words that have fallen from your mouth? Have you gauged their meaning and their depth? Your hand on your heart and conscience, are you the man to redeem all they promise? Are you sure that you are not one of those dastardly creatures who, with feigned humility, embrace our knees, the better to overcome our will power and our reason?"

"I?" exclaimed la Peyrade. "What! I ever overcome the fascination that began at our first meeting? Ah! Madame, the more I have resisted, and the more I have struggled against it, the more must you believe in my sincerity and my lasting enthralment! As I have spoken, so do I think. What I am thinking aloud to-day, I have been thinking in my heart from the day I first had the honor of being received here; and the long days through which I have fought against the spell have fortified me in the very loyalty to you that I would fain have choked!"

"Still, do not pledge yourself too hastily. We foreigners do not understand the frivolity with which the French sometimes enter upon the most solemn engagements. To us the word 'yes' is as sacred as an oath; our word is as good as our deed. We neither think nor do anything by halves. My family coat-of-arms bears the motto, not inappropriate to this case, 'Everything or Nothing.' That is saying a great deal, and yet hardly enough."

"Oh! that is a motto after my own heart!" answered the lawyer; "and my first act, when I leave here, will be to break forever with the shameful past which I seemed to weigh in the balance for a moment against the intoxicating future which you do not forbid me to look to."

"No," said the lady, "do not go at such a mad rate. I do not like to see people jump over precipices. These Thuilliers are good enough people at bottom, although they have hurt your feelings without so intending. Is it their fault that they belong to a class of society different from yours? Untie the knot, but do not cut it. And, above all, take time. Your conversion to my religion is so very sudden and new! How can you be sure what language your heart will speak to-morrow?"

"I am quite sure! We Southerners do not love like other Frenchmen!"

"But," said the Hungarian with a charming smile, "I thought we were talking about hatred!" And she held out her hand to the barrister, with a gesture at once pretty and bashful. The barrister, quite beside himself, rushed at the hand and devoured it with kisses.

"Enough, child!" said the foreigner, gently disengaging her hand, "and good-by for the present. I think my headache is gone."

La Peyrade took up his hat and was about to dash out of the room, but, halting at the door, he turned round and cast a look of eloquent tenderness at the Countess. She nodded him a graceful good-by, and as la Peyrade made a step toward her, she shook her finger at him, intimating that he was to remain where he was. He then passed out of the apartment. On the staircase he stopped to exhale, so to speak, the happiness with which his heart was overflowing. The words of the Countess, and the ingenious way in which she had wormed his sentiments from him, were sufficient guarantees to him of her sincerity, and he departed with faith unbounded.

He could bear the burden of his great resolution no longer than the next day, and accordingly went to the Thuilliers'. He arrived there in the most hostile and aggressive humor. But judge of his astonishment when, before giving him an opportunity to place himself on guard against a demonstration of forgiveness and renewed friendship, Thuillier threw himself into his arms.

"My friend," cried the ex-assistant chief, as he released the barrister from his embrace, "my political fortune is made! All the newspapers this morning, without exception, are talking of the seizure of my pamphlet, and you ought to see how the opposition papers cut up the government!"

"That is simple enough," said Théodose, without sharing his enthusiasm; "they are using you as a subject to write about. But far from improving your case, that will only make the court more anxious to pronounce sentence against you."

"Well, then," said Thuillier, proudly lifting his head, "I shall go to prison like Béranger, Lamennais, and Armand Carrel."

"From a distance, my dear fellow, persecution looks very handsome, but when you hear the heavy bolts closing on you, you may be sure it will seem a much less poetical business."

"But," objected Thuillier, "political offenders are always allowed to serve their time in a private asylum, and besides, I have not been condemned yet. You were of the opinion yourself yesterday that an acquittal might be hoped for."

"Yes, but since then I have heard things which render that view very doubtful. The same hand that withheld the Cross from you must have descended upon your Treatise. It is a case of premeditated murder."

"Since you know my dangerous enemy," said Thuillier, "I suppose you will not refuse to designate him to me?"

"I did not say I knew him, I merely have my suspicions. But that shows that you are always ready with a trap."

"A trap? What do you mean?" said Thuillier in a tone of curiosity which proved an entire unconsciousness of any such guilt.

"Why, you made Céleste a sort of decoy, to attract the birds to your house. Every one has not Monsieur Godeschal's magnanimity, who, after being refused, came out so generously in the matter of the bid on the house."

"Explain yourself more fully; I do not in the least understand."

"Nothing is easier to understand. Without counting myself, how many suitors are there for the hand of Mademoiselle Colleville? Godeschal, young Minard, young Phellion, Olivier Vinet, the deputy judge—all of them men who have been turned off as I have."

"Olivier Vinet?" cried Thuillier, as if struck by a ray

of light. "It is from there of course that the blow has come! His father is said to have a very long arm. And then it is said we turned him off, to use your rather crude expression. He spent an evening with us, and made no offer; no more, in fact, than Minard or Phellion. Only Godeschal took that risk, and he was refused without hesitation, and without his head being held under water."

"That may be true," la Peyrade went on, still seeking a quarrel. "It is only those who come out plainly with their speech that are strung up to the lamp-post."

"Come now," said Thuillier, "whom are you aiming at with your insinuations? Did you not the other day arrange everything with Brigitte. A nice time you are choosing to come talking to me about your love affairs, when the sword of justice is raised over my head."

"I see," sneered la Peyrade, "now you are trying to exploit your interesting position as a victim of the law. I knew perfectly well this would happen, and that, once the Treatise was written, you would forget all about my assistance."

"Pshaw! I do admire your supposition of the Treatise having brought me consideration, when, as a matter of fact, it has given rise to the most deplorable complications."

"How deplorable? Your political fortune is made!"

"Really, my dear boy," said Thuillier with emotion, "I should never have thought that you would have chosen my hour of adversity to come and point a pistol at my head, and make me the object of your scorn!"

"Come now," said la Peyrade, "here is your hour of adversity, and only a moment ago you threw yourself into my arms, like a man who had had a great stroke of luck.

Is it not time to make up your mind whether you are deserving of pity or whether you are a triumphant hero?"

"It is all very well for you to do the clever," answered Thuillier. "You will not make me contradict myself. I am logical, I am, even if I am not a genius. Naturally enough, I am consoled at seeing public opinion side with me, and at being honored with its esteemed sympathy through its printed organs. But do you not think that I would not have preferred it if things had taken their course? Seeing myself the butt of low malignity on the part of people as influential as the Vinets, how can I foresee what dangers I am exposed to?"

"It seems to me," said la Peyrade with pitiless insistence, "that you are like Weeping Will!"

"Yes," answered Thuillier, gravely—"Will who is weeping over a friendship he thought true and devoted, but which has nothing but sarcasm to give when I am expecting help."

"What help?" demanded la Peyrade. "Did you not declare distinctly enough that you were done forever with any collaboration of mine? I offered to plead for you, and you answered that you would engage some great lawyer."

"Perhaps I did so in the first moment of bewilderment, when that sudden blow struck me down; perhaps I may then have said such a foolish thing. But, after all, who is better qualified than yourself to explain the meaning of what came from your own pen? Yesterday I forgot myself, and you, with your wounded pride that knows no pardon for a slight offence, are to-day a very satirical and a very cruel person."

"Then," asked la Peyrade, "are you proposing formally that I defend you before the jury?"

"Of course, my dear fellow, for I do not see into what other hands I can put my case. I should pay an absurd price to some fine legal light, and he would defend me less skilfully than you would."

"Well, then, I refuse! Our roles, you see, are completely changed. Yesterday I thought, as you do, that I was the man for this case. To-day, I think you had better employ some barrister of renown, because, you see, now that Vinet is in the field, the affair has assumed such proportions as to frighten any one from taking the responsibility of pleading for you."

"I understand," said Thuillier ironically, "Monsieur was always aiming at a judgeship, and does not want a quarrel with the man who has already been mentioned as a probable Keeper of the Seals. You are very prudent, no doubt, but I cannot see how it will help on your marriage."

"That is to say," retorted la Peyrade, catching the ball at the rebound, "that to rescue you from the claws of the jury is the thirteenth labor of Hercules imposed upon me to win Mademoiselle Colleville's hand. I was right in anticipating that your demands would increase as fast as the proofs of my friendship to you. But I am thoroughly tired of all that, and to put an end to this puppet show, I have come to tell you that I want to give you back your word. So, you can dispose of Céleste's hand in any way you like; for my part I have no further pretensions."

Thuillier was dumfounded, and left speechless, by this abrupt and downright statement. Just then Brigitte came in. She was in a much more amicable mood than the day before, for her first words were full of hearty familiarity.

"Ah, there you are," said she to Théodose, "my promising young lawyer!"

"Mademoiselle, I bid you good-day," answered the Provençal, with solemnity.

"Well," said the old maid, not noticing la Peyrade's ceremonious behavior, "the government have got themselves into a nice mess, confiscating your pamphlet! You ought to see how the newspapers are scorching them this morning! Here is a paper published in our old district, 'L'Echo de la Bièvre.'"

Thuillier took the sheet and read the article with which the editor's grateful stomach had inspired his pen. "Yes," said he, folding the paper up, "it is a warm article, and very flattering to me. But I have something else to say. This gentleman, here present, has declared that he will not plead for me, and that he renounces his claim to Céleste's hand."

"He means," answered Brigitte, "that he retires if, after pleading, we do not allow the marriage at once. Well, I think the poor boy's wish is reasonable enough. After he has done this for us, there shall be no further delay, and whether the arrangement suits Mademoiselle Céleste or not, she must agree to it, because there is a limit to everything."

"Your argument, Mademoiselle," said la Peyrade, "might have some semblance of correctness if there were no other barristers but myself. Only, as the streets are paved with them, and as Thuillier himself only yesterday was talking of engaging a barrister of note, I do not feel the least compunction in refusing to undertake his defence. Now, as to this marriage, in order that it may not once more be made the subject of some brutal bargain, I withdraw from it altogether, in the most emphatic manner, and nothing shall now prevent Mademoiselle Colleville from accepting Monsieur Phellion's advances."

"Quite as you please, my dear gentleman," answered

Brigitte. "If that is your last word, we shall have no difficulty in finding a husband for Céleste, Monsieur Phellion or some one else; but allow me to say to you that the reason you give is not the true one, for after all one cannot go faster than one can run. If the wedding were decided upon to-day, the banns would still have to be published, and you know well enough that the mayor could not marry you before all the regular formalities had been complied with, and that in the interval Thuillier would be undergoing trial."

"Yes," said la Peyrade, "and if I lost the case, you would say that it was I who got Thuillier into prison, just as it was I who was to blame for the seizure."

"My dear sir, it seems to me that if you had written nothing the police would have had nothing to seize."

"Your reasoning is wrong, my dear girl," said Thuillier, perceiving that la Peyrade was shrugging his shoulders, "in that the document is not really incriminating from any point of view. It is not la Peyrade's fault if very influential people have singled me out as a victim of organized persecution. You remember that little deputy judge, Monsieur Olivier Vinet, whom Cardot brought in one evening? It appears that he and his father are enraged because we did not want him for Céleste, and that they have sworn revenge."

"But why did we refuse him," said Brigitte, "if not for the sake of our young gentleman here? For a Paris deputy is not a match to be despised."

"No doubt," said la Peyrade coolly, "only, he was not ready to contribute quite a million."

"What?" exclaimed Brigitte, angrily. "If you are going to talk of the house you told us to buy, I will tell

you that if you had had enough money to buy off the notary yourself, you would not have run after us. You need not think that I was altogether fooled by you. You spoke just now of a bargain, but it was you yourself who proposed it: 'Give me Céleste and I will give you the house.' That is what you said with your own mouth, and there were unforeseen expenses at that."

"Come, Brigitte," said her brother, "you are splitting hairs!"

"Splitting hairs!" repeated Brigitte. "Was the sum first mentioned exceeded, or was it not?"

"My dear Thuillier," said la Peyrade, "I think, as you do, that the discussion is exhausted, and that to grind it over again will only lead to more unpleasantness. My mind was made up before I came, so that nothing that can be said will shake my purpose. I shall not remain your *son-in-law*, but we shall nevertheless remain good friends." And he rose to go.

"One moment, Master Lawyer!" then said Brigitte, barring his way; "there is something else that is by no means exhausted, and now that we are to dissolve partnership, I should be much obliged if you would tell me what has become of the sum of ten thousand francs that Thuillier gave you for those rascals in the government who were to get us the Cross, which has not yet made its appearance?"

"Brigitte," said Thuillier in agony, "you have the tongue of a serpent. You were not supposed to know of this, which I told you in a moment of ill humor, and you gave me your promise never to speak of it to any one."

"No, but as I said," answered the implacable old maid, "we are dissolving partnership. When you dissolve partnership, affairs are liquidated. Ten thousand francs! High

enough for a real Cross, that! But for a Cross in the clouds it is an altogether higher price than I care to pay!"

"Come, dear Théodose," said Thuillier, going up to the barrister, now pale with anger, "do not listen to Brigitte; her affection for me has got the better of her. I know very well what those officials are, and I would not be astonished if you had put in some of your own money besides ours."

"Sir," answered la Peyrade, "unfortunately I am unable to immediately return you the sum demanded of me in such an insulting manner. But I will ask you to be good enough to grant me a slight respite, and if a promissory note will quiet your impatience, I am ready to sign one."

"Go to the devil with your note!" exclaimed Thuillier. "You owe me nothing, and it is we who are in your debt; for Cardot told me that for the splendid property you put into our hands you were entitled to at least ten thousand francs."

"Cardot! Cardot!" shouted Brigitte. "He is very generous with other people's money! We gave him Céleste—that was worth a great deal more than ten thousand francs!"

Upon this, la Peyrade flung her a contemptuous look, and stalked out majestically. He observed that Thuillier was motioning him to stay, but a furious gesture from Brigitte, queen and mistress as ever, riveted her brother to the spot where he was standing.

Arrived at home, the barrister consummated his emancipation by writing to Madame Colleville, that, his marriage with Céleste being broken off, he thought it well, from motives of propriety as well as from delicacy, not to show himself there again.

The next day, as la Peyrade was about to go to the Countess, to pay homage to her, and put his bravely recon-

quered liberty at her feet, he received a scented note. It made his heart beat violently, for on the seal he recognized the famous *Everything or Nothing*, which had been given him as the rule for the relationship begun between them.

"Dear Monsieur," wrote Madame de Godollo, "I guessed what conclusion you would come to. Thank you! But I must now think of one for myself, for you do not suspect me of wishing to stay forever in the social circle that is so foreign to us both, and to which I am now no longer bound by any interests whatever. To arrange for a change, and not to be called to account for harboring on the first floor a voluntary exile from the second, I must have to-day and to-morrow to myself. So, do not come to see me until day after to-morrow. By that time, I shall have settled with Brigitte, as they say on the Stock Exchange, and I shall have much to tell you. *Tua tota*,

"TORNA DE GODOLLO."

The "wholly thine," in Latin, delighted la Peyrade, who was not, however, astonished at it, since Latin is a second national language in Hungary. The two days of waiting, to which he was condemned, fanned the flame of passion that was consuming him, and when on the appointed day he arrived at the house in the Boulevard Madeleine, his love had reached a degree of incandescence to which he would have believed himself incapable a few days before.

This time la Peyrade was seen by the porter's wife, but apart from not wishing to be suspected of going to the Thuilliers, he was quite indifferent as to his purpose in the house being known. The ice being broken, his good fortune was now official, and he was more disposed to cry it out to the world than to make a mystery of it. After skip-

ping gayly up the steps; the barrister was just about to pull the bell, when, putting out his hand for the silk rope near the door, he observed that the bell-pull was gone. His first thought was that the absence of that article might be accounted for by an illness in which the patient could bear to hear no noises of any description. But other observations followed at once, which invalidated this theory, not a consoling one, in any event.

From the vestibule to the Countess's door, a stair carpet, fixed at each step by a brass rod, rendered the ascent soft and easy to visitors. The carpet had been removed. The door was masked by outer swing doors covered with green velvet. Of these, there was no sign left, but the slight damage done the wall by the workmen who had taken them away.

In his momentary agitation, the barrister thought he was on the wrong floor, but he soon corrected his impression by looking over the banister. Was Madame de Godollo moving?

The Provençal resigned himself to knocking at the great lady's door as one would at a *grisette's*, but his rap was responded to by that hollow sound denoting emptiness. At the same time, he noticed under the door, which he was in vain belaboring with his knuckles, the bright streak which betrays an uninhabited apartment, where there are no curtains, no carpets, and no furniture to deaden sound and dull the light of day. Forced to conclude the Countess had actually moved, la Peyrade imagined that, since his rupture with Brigitte, the old maid had caused this sudden departure by some unpardonable rudeness. But why had he not been told? What was this singular idea of putting him in the ridiculous position popularly and picturesquely

known as "Finding a face of wood"? Before leaving the place, he decided upon a last vigorous assault upon the door.

"Who is there, trying to knock the house down?" screeched the porter's wife, attracted by the barrister's violent demonstration.

"Does Madame de Godollo no longer live here?"

"Certainly not, since she has moved out. If the gentleman had told me he was going to see her, I could have saved him the trouble of breaking down the door."

"I knew she was to leave her apartment," lied la Peyrade, not wishing to betray his ignorance of the Countess's intentions, "but I did not think she would be going so soon."

"Must have been in a hurry," said the woman. "Went in a post-chaise this morning."

"Went in a post-chaise!" repeated la Peyrade, in amazement. "Has she left Paris, then?"

"Probably. It's not the custom here to take horses and a postilion to go from one house to another."

"And she did not tell you where she was going?"

"Monsieur has queer notions, if he thinks the tenants tell us their affairs."

"No—but her letters—if any should arrive after her departure—"

"Letters? I've orders to forward them to Monsieur le Commandeur, the little old gentleman who came to see her so often. You must have met him here."

"Yes, yes, of course," said la Peyrade, keeping his presence of mind under these successive shocks, "the old gentleman with powdered hair, who came nearly every day."

"Not exactly every day, but very often. Well, it is to him I am to send the Countess's letters."

"And her other acquaintances?" asked the Provençal casually. "Did she say nothing about them?"

"No, sir, nothing."

"Very well, my good woman, I thank you." And he turned to go.

"But I think," said the porter's wife, "that Mademoiselle upstairs will know more about it than I. Will Monsieur not go up? She is at home, and so is Monsieur Thuillier."

"No, it would be no use. I came to see Madame de Godollo about a commission I was to do for her. I have not time to stay."

"Yes, as I tell you, she left in a post-chaise this morning. If Monsieur had only come two hours earlier he would still have found her here. But by this time she must be a long way off."

With her fancy for saying everything twice over, this woman, who had been plying la Peyrade with such unkind information, seemed to dwell on the details that would torture him most. He went out of the house with despair in his soul. To say nothing of the stab this sudden departure had given him, he was invaded by jealousy, and in this acute state of terrible disappointment the most appalling possibilities presented themselves to his mind.

After meditating for a time, "These diplomatic women," said he to himself, "are often charged with secret missions, which demand absolute discretion and rapid movements." Then, as if under a quick reaction—"But supposing she were one of those adventuresses whom foreign governments so often employ as their agents? What if the history of the Russian Princess obliged to sell her furniture at such short

notice were also that of my Hungarian lady? However," he resumed, after another somersault of his brain, which was reeling in a very anarchy of ideas and emotions, "her education, her manners, her speech, everything proclaims her a woman with a high position in society. And besides, if she were only a bird of passage, why should she have taken so much trouble to captivate me?"

La Peyrade would have continued to weigh the arguments, for and against, had he not felt himself violently seized from behind, and had not a familiar voice exclaimed: "My dear barrister, take care! A horrible death threatens you! You are rushing headlong to destruction!"

Starting up, la Peyrade found himself in the arms of Phellion.

This happened in front of a house in process of demolition, at the corner of the Rue Duphot and the Rue Saint-Honoré.

Posted on the pavement opposite, Phellion, whose pronounced predilection for building operations will be remembered, had for a quarter of an hour been watching the drama of a wall about to give way to the united efforts of a squad of workmen. Watch in hand, the great citizen was computing the probable duration of the resistance of this mass of stone and plaster to the human hands conspiring to upset it. It was just at the hottest moment of the imminent catastrophe that la Peyrade, lost in the maze of his thoughts, and without paying attention to the warnings addressed to him from all sides, was entering the radius within which the wall would presumably fall. Seen by Phellion—who would have done the same for a stranger—la Peyrade certainly owed him his escape from an awful death, for at the very moment he was pulled back by the philanthropist's

arm, the wall came to the ground a few paces from him, with the noise of a cannon-shot, and amid huge clouds of dust.

"Thank you, sir," said the barrister, shaking his savior's hand, "if it had not been for you, I should have been crushed to death."

"My reward," said Phellion, "is the satisfaction of having rescued you from such frowning danger. And I may say that my satisfaction is not unmixed with pride, for I was not two seconds wrong in calculating the moment when that redoubtable block would shift its centre of gravity. But what may you have been thinking of, my dear sir? No doubt of the speech you are going to make in defence of Thuillier, since the public press has informed me of the public vengeance about to descend upon the head of our respected friend. It is a noble cause, sir, that you are championing. Accustomed as I am, owing to my activity on the reading committee of the Odéon, to form an opinion on productions of the mind, after examining several passages of the incriminating document, I cannot find that the tone of this pamphlet is of a character to justify the severe measures initiated against it. Between ourselves," added the great citizen, lowering his voice, "I confess that the government is doing a small thing."

"My view, also," said la Peyrade, "but the defence will not devolve upon me. I have urged Thuillier to call in the assistance of some lawyer of reputation."

"That may be good advice, and in any case it does honor to your modesty. No doubt you have just been to see him, our dear friend? I was at his house on the day the bomb exploded, and I am on my way there now. At my first visit I did not see him, I only found Brigitte, who was

engaged in argument with Madame de Godollo—a woman with political views. She had actually prophesied the seizure!"

"Did you know the Countess had left Paris?" said la Peyrade, availing himself of the first opportunity to indulge the theme of his monomania.

"Oh, she has left, has she? Well, my dear sir, I must tell you—although there was little love lost between her and yourself—that I look upon her departure as a misfortune. It will leave a great gap in the Thuillier circle. I tell you that because I think so, and because I am not in the habit of concealing my thoughts."

"To be sure, she was a very distinguished woman, with whom I might perhaps have come to an understanding, in spite of her prejudices. But this morning, without leaving word as to where she was going, she suddenly went off in a post-chaise."

"A post-chaise!" exclaimed Phellion. "I do not know if you share my prepossession, but I consider that a most enjoyable manner of travelling, and Louis XI., to whom we owe that admirable institution, hit upon a very happy idea; although, on the other hand, his sanguinary and despotic rule was not always—according to my poor lights—entirely free from reproach. Once only in my life have I made use of this mode of locomotion, and I must declare it a very superior way of travelling, in spite of the relatively inferior speed—"

These last words were a flash of light to la Peyrade, and without waiting for the continuation of the great citizen's postal Odyssey, he was tearing off in the direction of the Rue Pigalle, even before Phellion, cut short in his sentence, was fully aware of his disappearance.

Arrived at the office of the royal postal service, la Peyrade was rather at a loss how to go about obtaining the information he had come for. He began by explaining to the porter that he had a letter of very great importance to transmit to a lady of his acquaintance; that said lady had neglected to leave him her address; and that he had thought he might learn, from the passport she must have presented in order to hire the horses, what her destination was. Here he was interrupted.

"Is it a lady travelling with her maid, and whom I loaded up near the Madeleine?" asked a postilion, sitting in the corner of the room where la Peyrade was instituting his inquiries.

"Exactly so," said the lawyer, quickly going up to this providential person, and slipping a five-franc piece into his hand.

"Ha, ha! She's a funny traveller, she is!" said the postilion. "She told me to take her to the Bois de Boulogne, where she made me drive her about for an hour; then we stopped at the Barrière de l'Etoile, where she gave me a good fee, and took a cab, telling me to drive the coach back to a livery stable in the Saint-Honoré district."

"And the name of the livery stable?" quickly asked la Peyrade.

"It belongs to Monsieur Simonin."

Armed with this piece of news, la Peyrade resumed his search, and a quarter of an hour later stood in the presence of the livery man. This individual only knew that a lady living close to the Madeleine had hired a travelling coach, without horses, for the half-day, and that the carriage had been sent at nine o'clock in the morning, and

had been returned to the stable at noon by the postilion of the royal postal service.

"No matter," said la Peyrade to himself, "I am sure now that she has not left Paris, and that she is not fleeing from me. She very likely invented this journey to get rid of the Thuilliers. Fool that I am, there must be a letter for me at home that will clear up the whole matter!"

Arrived at the Rue Saint-Dominique-d'Enfer, he received a letter stamped Paris from the porter. Dashing up the stairs at a bound, the love-lorn Provençal indulged in the boyish trick of locking himself in his room before opening the letter. After breaking the seal with trembling fingers, he read the following:

"Dear Sir—I am disappearing forever, because my part is played out. I owe you thanks for having rendered it both agreeable and easy. After making you quarrel with the Thuilliers and the Collevilles, who are now fully aware of your true feelings toward them, and after carefully exposing to them, in a manner most irritating to their middle class pride, the decidedly annoying details of your abrupt and ruthless determination to break with them—having accomplished this, I am proud and happy to have done you a signal service. The little girl does not love you, and all you love in her is the bright eyes of her dowry. I have, therefore, saved you both from an intolerable calamity. In exchange for your intended, whom you threw over so badly, a charming bride is awaiting you. She is richer and more beautiful than Mademoiselle Colleville, and, speaking of myself, in conclusion, freer than

"Your very unworthy servant,

"Torna de Godollo.

"P.S.—For further information, apply without delay to Monsieur du Portail, private gentleman, Rue Honoré Chevalier, near the Rue Cassette, Saint-Sulpice district, where you are expected."

After reading this letter, the advocate of the poor put his head between his hands. He saw nothing, heard nothing, thought nothing. He was crushed.

La Peyrade required several days to recover from the sledge-hammer blow which had felled him. The shock, indeed, was terrible. Coming out of a golden dream, which showed him the future in such a smiling perspective, he found himself deceived in a manner most mortifying to his self-conceit and to his pretensions to profundity and cleverness. He was irretrievably cut off from the Thuilliers; loaded with a debt of twenty-five thousand francs, payable at a distant date, to be sure; pledged to refund to Brigitte the sum of ten thousand francs—a debt which respect for his dignity urged him to liquidate at the earliest possible moment; finally—and this capped the climax of his humiliation and disgust—he was obliged to acknowledge himself not thoroughly cured of the foolish passion he had felt for the woman who was the cause of the great disaster, and the instrument of his ruin. Now, either this Delilah was a very great lady, high enough placed to allow herself the most compromising amusements, and in that case she would have waived the role of a coquette in a comedy in which he himself had played the fool; or else she was an adventuress of noble descent, in the pay of this du Portail, and acting as his secret agent in the matrimonial intrigue. So that the judgment to be pronounced upon the dangerous siren would stamp her a woman of evil life or wicked heart.

But put yourself in the place of this child of Provence, with his hot blood and fiery brain, who for the first time in his life found himself face to face with love clad in jewels and lace, and who believed he was quaffing the tender passion from a cup of fine gold. As, after awakening, an impression remains of your disquieting dream, so la Peyrade, still under the ban of a thing that had never been but a shadow, needed the support of all his moral energy to efface the picture of the perfidious Hungarian. It would be truer to say that he never ceased thinking of her, but he carefully wrapped up his intense desire to succeed in finding her again in a laudable pretext, which he labelled "curiosity." Under cover of it, he achieved the following remarkable and ingenious deductions:

"Cérizet spoke to me about a rich heiress. In her letter, the Countess points out that the whole intrigue she entangled me into was to lead up to a rich marriage. Rich marriages that are thrown at people's head are not so plentiful as that the same chance should be offered me twice within a few weeks. Therefore, the match proposed by Cérizet and that mentioned in the Countess's letter regards the same mad woman whom I am so strangely being pressed to marry. Therefore, Cérizet, being in the plot, must be acquainted with the Countess. Therefore, I shall be put on her trace by him. Anyhow, I shall gain information about the complicated manœuvres of which I am the central object. Very evidently, a family which to reach their ends can dress their puppets in such fine clothes must have some position and importance. Therefore, I must see Cérizet."

It was about two o'clock when la Peyrade entered the premises of the magistrate's court of the twelfth district. Without stopping in the waiting-room, he pushed on into

another room, next to the clerk of the court's office. He found Cérizet writing at a shabby desk of black wood. As la Peyrade entered, the copyist gave him a fierce look, and, without rising from his seat, grunted—"Oh, it is you, Master la Peyrade. Well, what is this you have been doing to your friend Thuillier?" asked Cérizet.

"How are you?" asked la Peyrade, in a tone at once firm and friendly.

"I," answered Cérizet—"I am still rowing on the bench in my galley; and, to continue the nautical metaphor, I will ask what wind brings you here? Might it by chance be the wind of adversity?"

Without answering, the barrister took a chair near the questioner, and presently said gravely—"My dear fellow, we have something to talk about."

"It seems," said the venomous copyist, "that the Thuilliers have cooled off astonishingly since the pamphlet was seized."

"The Thuilliers are ingrates," answered la Peyrade, "and I have done with them."

"You may call it a rupture or a farewell," said Cérizet, "their door is none the less closed to you, and, according to what Dutocq has told me, Brigitte speaks of you in a manner no less than contemptuous. There, you see, my friend, what comes of trying to manage one's affairs all alone; complications happen, and there is no one to fill up the holes. If you had got me the lease, I should have been acquainted with the Thuilliers, Dutocq would not have abandoned you, and we should have steered you gently into port."

"What if I do not want to be steered into port?" exclaimed the barrister with some acidity. "I tell you that I

have had enough of the Thuilliers, that I took the first step in breaking off the connection, that I told them to get out of my light, and if Dutocq has told you anything else, you may tell Dutocq that he is a liar! Is that plain? It seems so to me."

"Take care!" said Cérizet, "you are talking about my master, and in his own lair!"

"Enough of that. I have come to see you about serious matters. Be kind enough to let the Thuilliers and their friends alone, and listen to me."

"Go on," said Cérizet, laying down his pen, which in the meanwhile had been scurrying over the official sheet, "I am all ears."

"Not long ago," began la Peyrade, "you spoke to me of a girl I was to marry. She was of age; she was rich, and slightly touched with hysteria, as you said euphemistically."

"Oh!" exclaimed the usurer, "I was expecting this! You have had lots of trouble in coming to the point!"

"In proposing this heiress to me," asked la Peyrade, "what was your idea?"

"Why, to throw an excellent bargain in your way, which you had only to stoop for. I was formally commissioned with making you the proposal, and there was no brokerage in it; I should have relied entirely on your generosity."

"But you were not alone in receiving a mandate to negotiate with me. There was also a woman similarly employed."

"A woman?" said Cérizet, in the most natural tone of voice. "Not that I know of."

"Yes, a stranger, rather young and pretty, whom you

must have met in the girl's family. She seemed much devoted to her."

"Never has there been any question of a woman in this negotiation. I had every right to believe that I had exclusive charge of it."

"What?" asked la Peyrade, fixing a searching eye on Dutocq's copyist, "you have never heard of the Countess Torna de Godollo?"

"Never in all the days of my life! This is the first time I have ever heard her name!"

"Well, then, there must be another match in the wind, for this woman, after a great many preliminaries, which would take too long to relate, formally offered me a young person much richer than Mademoiselle Colleville."

"And is she of age, and hysterical?" asked Cérizet.

"No, the proposal was not embellished with these accessories. But there is another detail, which perhaps may put you on the scent. Madame de Godollo requested me, in case I wanted to follow the thing up, to see Monsieur du Portail, a private gentleman."

"Rue Honoré-Chevalier?"

"Exactly."

"Very well. It is the same marriage being proposed from two different sides. But it is strange that I was not told I had an assistant."

"So that," said la Peyrade, "not only had you never an idea of the Countess's interference, but you do not know her, and you can give me no information about her?"

"For the present I cannot," answered Cérizet. "But I might make inquiries, for these proceedings seem to me rather cavalier. This employment of two agents, by the way, proves how desirable you are to the family."

At this moment, the door was cautiously opened, a female head peered in, and a voice, at once recognized by la Peyrade, addressed the clerk of the court's copyist.

"Oh, excuse me, Monsieur is busy. Might I say a word to Monsieur when he is disengaged?"

Cérizet, who was as quick with his eye as he was with his hand, noticed this: His chair being so placed that his face was in view of the new-comer, la Peyrade, as soon as he heard her honeyed drawl, had quickly turned his head away from her, so as not to show his face. Instead, therefore, of being rudely sent about her business, as happened to most people who applied to this extremely curt and disobliging copying clerk—"Walk, walk in, Madame Lambert!" the discreet visitor was welcomed, "you would have to wait too long!"

"Ah, Monsieur! the advocate of the poor!" exclaimed his creditor, whom the reader has no doubt recognized. "How happy I am to meet Monsieur. I had been to his house several times, to ask if he had had time to look after my little affair."

"Yes," said la Peyrade, "of late I have been called away from my office very often, but everything is in order, and has been put before the secretary."

"Oh, how good Monsieur is," said the pietist, clasping her hands.

"Then, you have business with Madame Lambert?" said Cérizet. "You had not mentioned it to me. Are you Father Picot's adviser?"

"No, unfortunately he is not," answered the pietist. "My master refuses to take advice from anybody, he is such an obstinate man, so self-willed! But, good sir, is it true that the family council is to meet again?"

"Certainly," replied Cérizet, "and not later than to-morrow."

"But, Monsieur, since the gentlemen of the court decided that the family was not in the right—"

"Yes," interrupted the copyist, "both the lower court and the higher court threw the case out, at the instance of the relations, who pleaded your master was insane. But the affair is to be taken up in a different way, and trustees are to be appointed for the management of the old man's property. That is what the family council is to assemble for to-morrow, and I think this time Father Picot will be put in leading-strings. There are some very serious accusations; it may do to make the hen lay eggs, but as for plucking it into the bargain—!"

"What, Monsieur surely does not believe—" said the pietist, raising her clasped hands to her chin.

"I believe nothing," said Cérizet. "I have not been called upon to pronounce judgment, but the relations affirm that you have embezzled considerable amounts, and that you have made investments which must be inquired into."

"Good heavens!" said the woman, "let them inquire! I have not a deed of property, not a share, not a banknote, not the slightest security in my possession."

"Oh, but," said Cérizet, looking at la Peyrade out of the corner of his eye, "there are always obliging friends who help one. Well, it is no affair of mine; every one must look after his own business. But what was it you wanted to say to me?"

"I wanted to ask you, sir, to ask his worship the clerk of the court to speak for us to his honor the justice of the peace. The vicar of Saint-Jacques is to speak for us, too.

The poor man," she added weeping, "will die if they go on tormenting him."

"I cannot conceal from you," said Cérizet, "that the judge is not favorably disposed; you know he refused to see you the other day. As for my master and myself, we cannot do much. Besides, you see, my dear lady, you are not liberal enough."

"You asked me if I had any little savings invested. I cannot tell you that I have, when everything has gone into that poor Monsieur Picot's housekeeping expenses, and I—I—I—am accu—accused of—of—of robbing him!"

Madame Lambert was now sobbing dolefully.

"It is my opinion," said Cérizet, "that you are making yourself out poorer than you really are, and if our friend la Peyrade, who seems to possess your confidence, were not tongue-tied by the strict rules of his profession—"

"I?" said la Peyrade hastily, "I know nothing of madame's affairs. She asked me to draw up a memorial, in a matter that is neither legal nor financial."

"Ah, that is it then," said Cérizet. "Madame went to see you about the memorial the day Dutocq met her there; you know, the day after our famous dinner at the Rocher de Cancale, where you were such a noble Roman." Without seeming to attach any importance to the reminiscence, he continued, "Well, my dear Madame Lambert, I will ask my master to speak to the judge, and if I find an opportunity, I will speak to him myself. But I warn you, he is not friendly to you."

Madame Lambert withdrew with effusive bows and protestations of gratitude. When she had gone, la Peyrade said—"You do not seem to believe that this woman came to me to have a memorial drawn up. Nothing is truer,

however. She has the reputation of being a very good woman in the street where she lives. A little old man, whom she is alleged to have cheated—according to information which has reached me—actually lives by her care and devotion. Consequently, the good woman has been told to make application for one of the Montyon prizes, and it is her claims to that distinction which she asked me to sum up and set forth."

"To be sure, those Montyon prizes! That is an idea! And we have been wrong to neglect them—especially myself, who am the banker of the poor, as you are their advocate. As for your client, she ought to be glad that Father Picot's relations are not members of the Academy, for the prize for good conduct they would have bestowed upon her is to be got in the police court. But to come back to our own business, I was going to say that, after all your twisting and turning, you are no better off than you were before, and I strongly advise you, as your Countess did, to go and see du Portail."

"What sort of a man is he?"

"A little old gentleman, as sly as the devil. But go, nevertheless, it will cost you nothing to look at him."

"Yes, I may possibly go, but first I want you to tell me what you know about this Countess de Godollo."

"What does the Countess matter to you? She is only a supernumerary in the play."

"Oh, I have my reasons," said the barrister. "Two or three days hence you will know all about her. I shall see you again then."

"My dear boy," said Cérizet, "you seem to be dallying by the roadside. Are we by any chance in love with the fair agent?"

"What a devil of a man," thought the barrister, "he guesses at everything, and there is no possibility of concealing anything from him.—No," resumed la Peyrade aloud, "I am not in love—quite the reverse, I am on my guard. I acknowledge I am only feeling my way in this match with the maniac; for, before committing myself, I want to know exactly what I am going into. So do not play any of your games, such as providing particulars about the Countess Torna de Godollo from your own imagination. I warn you that I have the means of verifying your report, and if I see you are trying to play me false, I shall bid your du Portail good-day at once."

Downstairs, la Peyrade was accosted by Madame Lambert, who had been waiting for him.

"I hope, sir," said the pietist unctuously, "that you do not believe all the horrible things Monsieur Cérizet said? And of course you know that I inherited my money from my uncle in England."

"Quite so," said la Peyrade, "but you understand that with all these rumors that your master's relations are sending about the good conduct prize is very much imperilled."

"If it is God's will that I am not to have it—"

"You must also see how important it is for you to keep silent about the service I did you. At the very first hint of indiscretion, as I told you, the money will be returned to you without further ado."

"Monsieur need have no fear."

"Very well, then, good-by, my dear woman," said la Peyrade, in a patronizing tone.

As he was leaving her a nasal voice called out from a window in the stairway—"Madame Lambert!"

It was Cérizet, who was suspicious of a meeting, and had come to make sure of it.

"Madame Lambert," he repeated, "Monsieur Dutocq has come back, and if you want to speak to him now—?"

La Peyrade could do nothing to prevent the interview, which might seriously endanger the secret of his loan.

"I am always in bad luck," he said to himself, as he went away. "When will it ever end?"

The instinct of domination was so strong in Brigitte that she regarded Madame de Godollo's exit with inward satisfaction. The woman, she felt, was vastly her superior, and although this had benefited the arrangement of the house, it caused the old maid much uneasiness. And when they parted, which they did in the friendliest spirit, and upon a plausible excuse from the Countess, Brigitte breathed again.

Her brother might have experienced similar feelings regarding la Peyrade. But while Madame de Godollo was only ornamental, the barrister was useful to the house they had quitted almost simultaneously, and so, in a few days' time, a dreadful want of the Provençal's wit made itself manifest in the political and literary career of his "dear friend." The municipal councillor had been asked to write an important report, at short notice. He could not decline the honor, which had accrued to him from his reputation as an able man, after the publication of his pamphlet, and yet stood appalled at his incapacity to fulfil his colleagues' official request unaided.

Fortunately, Rabourdin wanted to make some change in his apartment, and he came, as was proper, to consult his landlord. Thuillier granted what was asked with eager politeness, and afterward mentioned the report he had been commissioned to draw up, saying he would be glad of his

tenant's ideas on the subject. Rabourdin, at home on all such questions, at once threw a flood of light on the matter by a number of lucid and concise criticisms. He was one of those people to whom the intellectual grasp of their hearers is a matter of indifference. Whether a stupid or a clever person be the listener, either gives them an excitement to think aloud, and offers almost the same stimulus. When he had done, Rabourdin saw that Thuillier had not understood, but he had taken pleasure in his own eloquence, and was otherwise grateful to his landlord for having so speedily complied with his request. Before leaving, he said he remembered having some notes on the subject among his papers, and the same evening, in fact, sent Thuillier a bulky manuscript.

The councillor spent the night delving into this valuable store of information, and ultimately extracted more than enough to furnish a creditable essay, even though he was a clumsy pirate. In the council, two days after, the report was warmly praised, and Thuillier came home radiant over the congratulations tendered him. The event was a landmark in his life, for in his old age he still spoke of "the report he had the honor of submitting to the general council of the Seine." But from that day forth la Peyrade sank in his estimation; he perceived that he could do without the Provençal, and his expectation of emancipation was accompanied by another pleasure.

A parliamentary crisis was impending, and this seemed to the ministry an opportunity of depriving their adversaries of a fertile excuse for hostility, by relaxing the severe regulations concerning the press for some time in operation. Included in this sort of hypocritical amnesty,

Thuillier one morning received a letter from the lawyer whom he had employed instead of la Peyrade, which contained the announcement that the court had dismissed the charge, and had ordered the restitution of the pamphlets.

Then Dutocq's prophecy came true. Relieved of this load, Thuillier played the braggart, and in chorus with Brigitte spoke of la Peyrade as an adventurer whom he had clothed and fed, who had cheated him out of large sums of money, and who had then behaved with the basest ingratitude. In fact, Thuillier was glad to count him among his acquaintances no longer.

Cérizet, who learned all these particulars from Dutocq, would not have failed to repeat them all hot to la Peyrade, but the meeting at which the copyist was to bring the barrister details about Madame de Godollo did not take place. La Peyrade had, in the meantime, become enlightened in the following manner:

Perpetually haunted by the thought of the lovely Hungarian, and waiting—or rather not waiting—for the result of Cérizet's investigation, he scoured the town in every direction, and was to be seen, like the idlest loafers, in all the most popular resorts, his heart telling him that he might meet the object of his assiduous search.

One evening, about mid-October, and when the autumn weather was, as it often is in Paris, most delightful, the Provençal was airing his passion and his melancholy on the boulevards, where the life and bustle of summer were prevailing. On the Boulevard des Italiens, formerly known as the Boulevard de Gand, as he passed by the mixed company sitting in front of the Café de Paris, la Peyrade suddenly felt a tremendous shock: he saw, from afar, his adored Countess. She was alone, and more showily dressed

than the place warranted, and the fact of being unescorted; beside her sat a white lap dog upon a chair, which one of her pretty hands was fondling. After assuring himself that he was not mistaken, the barrister was about to rush up to the heavenly vision, when he was anticipated by a "lion" of the most conquering type. Without throwing away his cigar, and without even raising his hat, the handsome young man at once accosted the Provençal's ideal woman. When she saw la Peyrade turn pale, and disposing himself to address her, the siren no doubt took fright, for she got up, and grasping the arm of her new companion, said to him—"Have you your carriage here, Emile? This is the last night at Mabille, and I should like to go."

Thus flung at the unhappy Théodose, the name of that disreputable place was a blessing in disguise, for it saved him from an act of folly—that of speaking to a woman on the arm of a quickly accepted knight, a worthless creature on whom he had been lavishing the tenderest thoughts only a few minutes before.

"It is not worth the trouble to insult her!" said he to himself.

But as lovers are not easily unhorsed, the Provençal did not consider that he knew everything that was to be known. Not far from the spot just evacuated by the Hungarian another woman was seated, also alone. She was of mature age, and wore a hat with very large feathers and a cashmere shawl, none the better for wear. Her whole appearance suggested a checkered and not too respectable life. La Peyrade, therefore, sat down next to this woman, and without ceremony asked her—"Do you happen to know, Madame, who that lady was who just went away on the young gentleman's arm?"

"Certainly I do, Monsieur; I know nearly all the ladies who come here."

"And what is her name?"

"Madame Kormorn."

"Is she as impregnable as the fortress whose name she bears?" continued the barrister.

It may be remembered that during the Hungarian revolution, the newsmongers and the papers were constantly dinning the name of the famous citadel of Kormorn into our ears, and la Peyrade knew that an inquiry is always most successful when conducted in a light and easy manner.

"Should you be desiring to make her acquaintance?"

"I do not know," answered the Provençal. "But she is a woman one cannot help thinking of."

"And a dangerous one too!" went on the matron; "and a skinflint, without the least capacity for acknowledging substantially things that have been done for her. I know what I am talking about. When she came here from Berlin six months ago she came to me with very good letters of introduction."

"Really?" observed la Peyrade.

"Yes, I then had a very nice piece of land in the neighborhood of Ville-d'Avray, with a park, hunting-preserves, and fresh-water fishing, and as I was down there all by myself, and was not well enough off to keep a country house in the right style, several gentlemen and ladies said to me: 'Madame Louchard, you ought to give picnic parties at your place—' "

"Madame Louchard," repeated la Peyrade. "Are you any relation to Monsieur Louchard of the commercial police?"

"His wife, sir; but judicially separated. He was a

horror of a man, who would have liked to make up with me well enough, but I can forgive everything except a want of respect, and when I tell you that one day he dared to raise his hand against me—"

"Well, then," said la Peyrade, leading the woman back to the point, "the picnics began, and Madame de Godollo—I was going to say Madame Kormorn—"

"Was one of my first guests. She made the acquaintance of an Italian in my house, a very fine man, a political refugee, but of quite a high class. You understand, of course, that it did not suit me to have love affairs carried on in my house. However, this man was such a true lover, and he was so unhappy at not being able to make an impression on Madame Kormorn, that I at last became interested in this affair of the heart, which was a lucrative one for the lady, since she got a lot of money out of the Italian. Well—would you believe that, being a little pressed, and asking her to oblige me with a trifling amount, she refused, and left my house, taking her lover away with her, who, I must say, has had no reason to be pleased with the connection."

"And what happened to her then?"

"What happened was that this snake knew every European language. The woman was clever to the tips of her fingers, and even more artful than clever. So much so, that, standing in some sort of relation to the police, she handed over to the government some of the Italian's correspondence, which was of a nature to get him expelled from the country."

"And since the Italian's disappearance from the scene, Madame Kormorn—?"

"Since then she has had several affairs and has wrecked

a few fortunes. But I thought that she had vanished; for more than two months she did not show herself at all, when, the other day, she came out again more splendid than ever. For my part, I do not advise Monsieur to run after her. But Monsieur looks like a Southerner, and is probably very ardent, and so perhaps all I have told him will only go to his head. It cannot be denied that she is a fascinating woman—oh, yes, very fascinating! She used to like me very much, though we did not part good friends, and just now she was asking for my address, saying that she would come and visit me."

"Thank you, Madame, I will think it over," said la Peyrade, rising and bowing. The bow was returned with stern coldness. His abrupt departure indicated that he did not mean business.

Seeing the barrister pursuing his inquiry in a sort of mirthful spirit, one might have believed him suddenly cured, but his superficial calmness and self-possession was but the lull before the storm. On leaving Madame Louchard, la Peyrade threw himself into a cab, and there in a flood of tears, similar to that witnessed by Madame Colleville, on the day that he had thought himself cheated in the matter of the bidding, he first gave vent to his grief. The siege of the Thuilliers, so patiently prepared at the cost of such severe sacrifices, had been rendered ineffective; Flavie was completely avenged for the odious comedy he had been playing with her; his affairs were in a worse state now than when Cérizet and Dutocq had shut him up, like a devouring wolf, in the fold, from which he had allowed himself to be driven like a silly sheep; his plan of retribution against the woman who had so easily circumvented his wit had collapsed, although the living memory remained of the

seductions to which he had succumbed—such were the reflections and emotions of a sleepless, distressful night.

The next day, la Peyrade had ceased to think. He was the victim of a violent fever, and the symptoms were so grave that the doctor took precautions against the brain fever that was imminent. Bleeding, leeches, ice on his head—this was the pleasant conclusion of the Provençal's dream of love. But it must be stated, at once, that the physical catastrophe led to a complete moral cure. For soon the barrister had no other feeling left for the Hungarian impostor than that of cold contempt, which did not even rise to a desire for revenge.

On his feet once more, and again revising his prospects —for he had lost much ground—la Peyrade asked himself whether he ought not to attempt reconciliation with the Thuilliers, or whether he ought to cast in his lot with the mad rich girl who had gold, where others had a sound brain. But everything that recalled his disastrous campaign brought forth an invincible repulsion in him, and besides, how unsafe to deal with this du Portail, who employed such vile instruments in his scope of action! Great commotions of the soul are like storms that purify the atmosphere. They have a moralizing effect, and lead to strong and worthy resolutions. La Peyrade, as the result of the cruel deception he had undergone, experienced a revulsion of feeling and of ideas. He examined himself as to the life of mean and base intrigue he had been leading for a year. Was there no better, no higher employment open to the unusual faculties he was conscious of possessing? He might go to the bar, like any one else, and this was a straight and broad road to the best satisfaction of legitimate ambition. In order to establish and maintain himself in the Thuillier

household, and to marry the daughter of a clarinetist and a coquette, he had wasted more wit, more art, and more dishonesty than enough to have launched him in a career.

"Enough," said he to himself, "of such as Dutocq and Cérizet, enough of the nauseating atmosphere of Minards, Phellions, and Collevilles. Let me live in the real Paris, and shake off this urbane reproduction of provincial life, far more absurd and petty than the provinces themselves. They, at least, in spite of their narrowness, have an individuality of their own, and a certain dignity. The people there are frankly themselves, the opposite of the Parisians, but these people are mere shams." He therefore went to see two or three lawyers who had offered to introduce him to the courts by means of a few small cases. He accepted those directly offered him, and three weeks after his rupture with the Thuilliers he was no longer the advocate of the poor, but a regular pleading barrister. He had already acted in several cases with success, when one morning he was much disturbed by a letter.

The president of the association of barristers requested him to call at his office, at court, during the day, on a matter of importance. The Provençal at once thought of the Madeleine house. If that transaction got to the ears of the Court of Discipline, it would render him amenable to citation before that tribunal, whose severity was well known. Now, this du Portail, on whom he had not yet called, disregarding the conditional promise made to Cérizet, might have learned the whole history of the bidding from Cérizet himself. This man, judging from the performance with the Hungarian, thought all weapons allowable. In his fierce determination to compass the marriage of the demented girl, might not this unscrupulous man have jumped at the oppor-

tunity of informing against him? Seeing him embarked courageously and not unsuccessfully on the career in which he might achieve independence while making his fortune, had not his persecutor probably designed to spoil that career? While breakfasting with a bad appetite, the Provençal was indulging in such unpleasant speculations as these, when Madame Coffinet, who had the privilege of doing his housekeeping, came in, and asked him if he would see Monsieur Etienne Lousteau.

A moment later he was confronted by the visitor, whose face looked familiar to him.

"Sir," said the new-comer to la Peyrade, "I had the honor of lunching with you not long ago at Véfour's. I was invited to that party, which suffered an unpleasant interruption on account of Monsieur Thuillier, your friend."

"Ah, indeed," said the barrister, giving him a chair, "then you belong to the staff of a newspaper?"

"I am editor-in-chief of the 'Echo de la Bièvre,' and it is precisely about my paper that I wish to speak to you. Do you know what has happened?"

"No," answered la Peyrade.

"What? You do not know that yesterday the ministry met with a tremendous reverse, and instead of resigning, as was to be expected, are dissolving the Chamber, and appealing to the country?"

"I knew nothing about all that, not having read the morning paper yet."

"Now, you see, all parliamentary ambitions are taking the field, and if I am properly informed, Monsieur Thuillier, already a member of the general council, intends to stand as deputy for the twelfth district."

"Yes," said la Peyrade, "he seems to have some such project in view."

"Very well, sir, I wish to put an instrument into his hands whose efficacy you will recognize, I think. The 'Echo de la Bièvre,' a technical journal, may have decisive influence on the election in the district."

"And would you be disposed to offer your support for Thuillier's candidature?"

"More than that, I want to propose to Monsieur Thuillier that he take over the organ altogether. As its owner, he can mold it to his own purposes."

"First of all," asked la Peyrade, "what is the position of your paper? As a technical journal, as you said it was just now, it is a paper I have rarely seen—in fact, I should not know it at all, had it not been for the able article you wrote in defence of Thuillier, at the time of the seizure of his pamphlet."

Etienne Lousteau bowed his thanks for the compliment, and said—"Our position is an excellent one, and we can let you have the paper on reasonable terms, since we are on the point of suspending publication."

"How strange—a prosperous newspaper!"

"Allow me—it is quite natural. The founders, who are all representatives of the great tanning industry, first issued this paper with a well-defined object. That object has been reached, and the 'Echo de la Bièvre' has, therefore, become an effect without a cause. There is no further reason for its existence. The shareholders, who do not depend upon trifling profits, therefore, think it expedient to liquidate."

"But does this paper pay expenses?"

"That," replied Lousteau, "is a matter that has never concerned us in the least. The number of subscribers was

nothing to us, for the mainspring of the enterprise was direct influence exercised on the Department of Commerce, to secure a higher import duty on foreign leather."

"But what value," said la Peyrade, "do you put on a publication that has few, if any, subscribers, that does not make expenses, and that up to now has pursued an entirely different policy from that to be taken up henceforth?"

"Before answering," rejoined Lousteau, "let me ask you another question. Are you prepared to buy?"

"That depends," said the barrister. "Of course I must see Thuillier first, but I can tell you at once that he is not at all versed in journalistic affairs, and that according to his middle class ideas the ownership of a newspaper is something quite ruinous. It would therefore be quite useless on your part to state a large figure, which would only frighten him."

"No, we shall be most reasonable, as I said. I have been left a free hand regarding the money question. Only you will please observe that we already have several offers, and that in giving Monsieur Thuillier the preference we are extending him a very special compliment. When may I hope for your answer?"

"To-morrow, very likely. May I have the pleasure of calling on you to-morrow?"

"No," said Lousteau rising, "I shall come here to-morrow, at the same hour, if that will suit you."

"Thank you," said la Peyrade, and showed his guest to the door, believing him a man endowed with more conceit than ability.

From the manner in which the Provençal had adopted the notion of constituting himself an envoy to Thuillier, the reader will gather that a sharp reaction had occurred in him.

Even if he had not been in receipt of the alarming letter from the president of the barristers' association, the new phase of Thuillier's parliamentary ambitions would have opened fresh fields of thought to la Peyrade. It looked as though his "dear friend" were to come back to him, tied hand and foot by his infatuation with legislatorial functions. Was this not the time—though proceeding cautiously, in view of former experiences—to renew his suit for the hand of Céleste? Far from being a hindrance to any of the good resolutions springing from his disappointment in love and his brain fever, this marriage would, on the contrary, assure their continuance and their success; but if, as it was to be feared, one of those thunderbolts descended upon him from the Court of Discipline, which annihilate a man's career, then it was only natural to go for a remedy to the source of the evil, that was to say, to the Thuilliers, the authors and the abettors of his downfall. It was his instinct and his right to demand shelter and substance from them.

Revolving in his head such considerations as these, la Peyrade repaired to the court, to wait on the president of the association.

He had guessed aright. In a very explicit and very circumstantial statement, the whole of his conduct in the affair of the house had been brought to the attention of his fellow-barristers, and being ready to acknowledge that an anonymous accusation could only be looked upon with extreme distrust, the high official stated his willingness to listen to the alleged culprit's defence. La Peyrade did not venture to take refuge in a system of absolute denial. The hand that had dealt the blow must, he imagined, be too strong and too skilful not to have proofs to present. But while acknowledging the charge to be substantially genuine,

he tried to lend it a favorable interpretation. He saw, however, that he had not made out a good case for himself, since this was what the president answered—"Directly after the vacation season I will report to the association upon the accusation against you and upon your counter-arguments."

Thus dismissed, la Peyrade felt his future at the bar badly threatened, but a respite had been obtained, and he would have time, if the worst came to the worst, to find a place where to lay his head. He went to put on his gown, which he still had the right to wear, and betook himself to the fifth chamber, where he had a case to defend.

On his way out of court he saw *his* Thuillier from afar, who, as soon as he was within reach, called out to him—"Hello, Théodose! So you are practicing in the courts now!"

"Well, it seems to me," answered la Peyrade, "that as for barristers in the courts, they are much the same as the Turks in Constantinople, where, I have been told, there are a good many. It is rather yourself whom one would hardly expect to find here."

"Not at all," said Thuillier. "I have come in connection with that infernal pamphlet. I was summoned," he went on, with apparent embarrassment, "to pay some registration fee or other. How is a man to make out their wretched scrawls?"

"And they hit upon the very day for this summons when the 'Moniteur,' announcing the dissolution of the Chamber, mentioned you as a candidate for the twelfth district."

"Why not? What relation to my candidature can the registration possibly have?"

"I will tell you," answered la Peyrade dryly, "how they are related. The judiciary is an essentially amiable and

obliging body. 'Here,' it said to itself, 'is this good Monsieur Thuillier, a candidate for the Chamber; he must be a little bit sorry for the strained situation between himself and his former friend, Monsieur de la Peyrade, with whom he now regrets ever having quarrelled. He must be got out of the difficulty. We will summon him to pay a fee he does not owe, and he will come to court, where la Peyrade is every day. In this way he will meet him unintentionally, and his pride will be saved an unpleasant humiliation.' "

"Well, you are all wrong about that," answered Thuillier, breaking the ice. "To show you how little calculation there is in this, I must tell you that I have just come from your house. The porter's wife sent me here. That's the whole story!"

"I am glad to hear that," said la Peyrade. "Honest confession is good for the soul; one likes to play with people who lay their cards on the table. What was it you wanted to speak to me of? Was it your election? I have been thinking about that already."

"Have you indeed? And how?"

"Look here," answered la Peyrade, fumbling under his gown, and drawing a paper from his pocket; "this is what I scribbled off just now, while the barrister on the other side was making his eloquent harangue."

"What is it?" asked Thuillier.

"Here, take it. You will see."

And Thuillier read the following:

ESTIMATE FOR A NEWSPAPER

QUARTO SIZE, THIRTY FRANCS A YEAR

On the basis of an edition of five thousand copies, the monthly cost would be:

Paper—five reams at 12 francs	1,860	francs
Typesetting	2,400	"
Printing	450	"
Editor	250	"
Clerk	100	"
Manager and Cashier	200	"
Mailing Department	100	"
Women Folders	120	"
Office Boy	80	"
Wrappers and Office Expenses	150	"
Rent	100	"
Postage	7,500	"
Editing and News Gathering	1,800	"
Total per month	15,110	francs
" " year	181,320	"

"Do you want to start a newspaper?" asked Thuillier, aghast.

"I," said la Peyrade—"I do not want anything. It is for you to say whether you want to be deputy or not. We have a name for a paper; the editorial writers will be you and myself, and a few young fellows available in Paris by the shovelful; and I have a manager in view."

"What is the name to be?"

"The 'Echo de la Bièvre.'"

"But there is a paper of that name already!"

"Just why I advise you to go into this business. Do you think I would be insane enough to want you to start a new paper? The 'Echo de la Bièvre'! A name to conjure with in an election for the Chamber in the twelfth district! You have only to say the word, and the magic wand is yours!"

"How so?" asked Thuillier, curious.

"Why, all you have to do is to buy it. You can have it for a song."

"But," said Thuillier, gloomily, "there is the purchase money that you have not considered."

"You worry over trifles," said la Peyrade, shrugging his shoulders. "There are very different problems to be solved."

"What do you mean?"

"Good heavens! Do you suppose that, after what has passed between us, I am quietly going to harness myself to your election chariot without knowing exactly what I am to get by it."

"But," said Thuillier, rather astonished, "I thought friendship consisted in the exchange of services."

"Quite so. But when the exchange comes from one side all the time, and nothing ever comes from the other, friendship grows tired of this sort of distribution of labor, and asks for something better balanced. It must be Céleste's husband who is to help you, and not Théodose de la Peyrade."

"At the fastest rate of going, as Brigitte observed, it would take about a fortnight to arrange for the wedding, and just fancy grounding arms for two weeks out of the eight before election!"

"The day after to-morrow," answered the Provençal, "our names could be posted at the mayor's office, and in the interval of publishing the banns something might be done. That is not, of course, a step from which one cannot recede; but it is at any rate a moral pledge, and a great gain in the right direction. Your notary can draw up the marriage contract. If you conclude to buy this paper, as you will not wish to keep an idle horse in your stable, I am not afraid of your playing me false, since without me you would find your gun too difficult to handle."

"But supposing, my dear fellow," objected Thuillier, "all this should prove too troublesome and expensive?"

"It is hardly necessary for me to say that you must judge of the conditions of sale yourself; I have no more wish than you to buy a pig in a poke. To-morrow, if you give me your authority, I will talk to the owner on your behalf, and of course you may feel confident that I shall represent your interests as if they were my own."

"Very well, my dear boy, go ahead!"

"And when the paper is finally purchased, the day will be fixed for the signing of the contract?"

"Whenever you like; but you agree to use all your influence in my cause?"

"As completely as I would for myself; and this is not an empty boast, for I have received hints as to a possible candidature of my own, and if I were revengeful—"

"I acknowledge," said Thuillier humbly, "that you would make a better deputy than I would. But you are not of the proper age yet, it seems to me."

"There is a better reason than that," said la Peyrade—"you are my friend. I find you now what you were before, and I shall keep the promise that I gave you. I should like it to be said of me: 'He made deputies, but never would be one.' I must leave you now, as I have something to attend to. Come and see me to-morrow at noon: I shall have news for you."

The purchase price was extraordinarily small. A five-hundred-franc note, for which Lousteau never particularly accounted to the shareholders, put the ownership, the title-deed, the plant, and the goodwill of the paper into Thuillier's hands, who at once began its reorganization.

While this reorganization was in process, one morning Cérizet betook himself to du Portail, with whom la Peyrade was now more than ever averse to have dealings.

"Well," said the little old man to the banker of the poor, "is the result known yet of the message to the president of the barristers' association? Have the lawyers got wind of it yet?"

"Pooh!" said Cérizet, who through frequent intercourse with the mysterious man of the Rue Honoré-Chevalier was on a more or less familiar footing with him, "that's of no consequence! The eel is slipping through our fingers again; neither gentle nor violent measures affect this devil of a fellow! Even if he has made a bad impression on the president, he is on better terms than ever with *his* Thuilliers. Utility, as Figaro says, shortens distances. Thuillier wanted his assistance for the election in the Saint-Jacques district, and so they simply kissed and were friends."

"And no doubt," remarked Cérizet's interlocutor calmly, "the wedding is fixed for an early date."

"There is something else to be considered first," said Cérizet. "That maniac has persuaded Thuillier to buy a newspaper, which will swallow up a huge sum. As he will want to get his money back, he will stick to the other man. It looks as though they would be glued together for all eternity."

"What paper is it?" asked du Portail, carelessly.

"A rag called the 'Echo de la Bièvre,'" answered the usurer disdainfully, "which a destitute old journalist managed to foist on the curriers of that part of the town, making it their organ. From a literary and political point of view the sheet is worthless, but Thuillier thinks he has made a master stroke."

"Well, for the purposes of a local election, it is not a badly chosen instrument. La Peyrade has talent, energy, and great mental resources. He may make something of

this 'Echo.' Under what banner does Sire Thuillier propose to march?"

"Thuillier is an oyster; he has no opinions at all. Until the publication of his pamphlet, he was a fanatical conservative, like all of the middle class. But since the seizure he has gone over to the opposition. His first stage was probably the left centre; but if, at election time, the wind blows from another quarter, he will no doubt go all the way to the extreme left. Self-interest is the only measure of those people's convictions."

"Tell me, have you not done newspaper work, you, the *bold* Cérizet?"

"Yes," replied the other, "I even was at the head of one, with la Peyrade. It was an evening paper. A pretty trade it was, and we were well paid for it, too!"

"Indeed. Is there any reason why you should not manage a paper again—with la Peyrade?"

Cérizet looked at du Portail, amazed.

"Are you the devil, sir, that nothing escapes your knowledge?"

"Oh, I know a few things.—But what is the precise state of affairs between yourself and la Peyrade?"

"The state of affairs is this. Recollecting my previous experience, and knowing of no one else to engage, he came to offer me the managership last night."

"I was not aware of that, but thought it likely. Did you accept?"

"Only conditionally. I asked a little time for reflection. I wanted to see what you would say to it."

"As for me, I think we ought to make the best of a bad job. I would rather have you inside the combination than outside."

"Quite so. But there is a difficulty about getting in. La Peyrade knows I am in debt, and he will not provide the security of thirty-three thousand francs that must be entered in my name. I have nothing. Of the twenty-five thousand he paid me back two months ago, I have only two thousand left. With the rest, I paid my most pressing debts."

"What! Your liabilities were more than twenty-five thousand francs?"

"Would a man go into bankruptcy for less?" said Cérizet, as though propounding an axiom.

"I see you must have the money," said du Portail, annoyed. "But it is a question whether your presence in the business is worth that much."

"Never fear. If I were once settled down with Thuillier, I should by no means despair of spoiling the pudding between him and our barrister. In the management of a paper, there are a thousand causes of friction, and by always siding with the stupid man against the clever one, I shall raise the self-esteem of the first, and hurt the vanity of the other, in such a way as to make the situation unendurable to both. But, independently of all this, I think I have another good card to play."

"Out with it, then!" exclaimed du Portail impatiently. "You are beating about the bush as though there was something to be gained by keeping me in the dark."

"Remember," said Cérizet, at last coming to the point, "that some time ago Dutocq and I were very much puzzled at the impertinent way in which la Peyrade suddenly produced his twenty-five thousand francs?"

"Do you mean," asked the old gentleman sharply, 'that you discovered the source of that money? Was there anything underhand about the transaction?"

Cérizet then detailed all the circumstances he knew relating to Madame Lambert, adding that, though he had captured the woman in his office at court, he had failed to wring a confession from her, although the dear lady's behavior largely confirmed Dutocq's suspicions and his own.

"Madame Lambert, Rue Val-de-Grace, No. 9, care of Monsieur Picot, professor of mathematics," repeated du Portail after Cérizet, taking down the address. "That will do, my dear Monsieur Cérizet. Come and see me again to-morrow."

"But please remember that I must give la Peyrade his answer during the day. He is in a great hurry to have matters settled."

"Very good. You will accept, asking for twenty-four hours in which to furnish the security, and if, after I have made inquiries, we see it is to our interest to retract, you will merely have broken your word. You cannot be imprisoned for that."

Apart from a sort of strange fascination which he exercised over his agent, du Portail never missed an opportunity of reminding him of the dark deed that had led to their present connection.

The next day, upon Cérizet's appearance, du Portail began thus—"You guessed right about Madame Lambert. Obliged to conceal the existence of her hoard, this woman, who at the same time had wanted to hide it at good interest, took a notion of approaching la Peyrade, whose habits of piety commended him to her confidence. The money must have been handed over to him without a receipt. In what denominations of currency was Dutocq paid?"

"In nineteen one-thousand-franc notes and twelve of five hundred."

"Exactly so," du Portail went on, "and there now seems to be no doubt about it. But now, what use do you propose to make of this information in regard to Thuillier?"

"I intend to hint that la Peyrade, to whom he is to give his goddaughter, is horribly in debt, that he is borrowing money surreptitiously from usurers, that to relieve himself he would pick the newspaper to the bone, that his embarrassed financial position may come to a climax at any moment, and do the worst injury to the candidate supported by him in an election."

"Not at all bad. But you might utilize your discovery in a more radical and more conclusive way."

"Which is?"

"Is not Thuillier still in a fog as to the seizure of his famous pamphlet?"

"Certainly," answered Cérizet. "La Peyrade was only telling me yesterday, wanting to show me how far Thuillier's childish innocence could go, how he had led him into the most absurd error. The good man is thoroughly persuaded that the seizure was made at the instance of Monsieur Olivier Vinet, a young deputy judge, who had aspired to the hand of Mademoiselle Colleville, and had been refused. It was supposed to be an act of vengeance."

"Excellent! To-morrow, by way of preparation for another version, to emanate from yourself, Thuillier will receive from Monsieur Vinet a very strong and emphatic denial of his having committed such an abuse of power!"

"Ah!" said the admiring Cérizet.

"A further explanation must then be found," continued du Portail, "and you will assure Thuillier that he is the victim of terrible machinations on the part of the police.

The police, you know, do nothing else but work machinations."

"Of course," rejoined the usurer. "I signed that statement a hundred times, when I was writing for Republican newspapers, and when—"

"You were the *bold* Cérizet," interrupted du Portail. "In this case, the machinations of the police are the following: The government was much displeased at Thuillier's election, without its influence, to the general municipal council of the Seine. It resented the fact that an independent and patriotic citizen had carried the election without any government support whatever. The fact was known that this great man was also writing a Treatise on the always delicate financial question, on which this dangerous person was an acknowledged authority. Now, what did this habitually corrupt government do? It subventioned a man reputed to be Thuillier's private adviser, and in consideration of twenty-five thousand francs, which is a trifle to the police, this insinuating adviser undertook to steer two or three sentences into the pamphlet sufficient to place the author directly at odds with the public prosecutor. What doubt will be left in Thuillier's mind of la Peyrade's guilt when he learns that his friend, who had no resources whatever, paid Dutocq, on the nail, just that very sum of twenty-five thousand francs?"

"The deuce!" exclaimed Cérizet, "not a bad idea! Men like Thuillier will believe anything they are told about the police."

"In view of this," added du Portail, "Thuillier will scarcely wish to keep company with such an editor, and would be still less anxious to give him his goddaughter for a wife."

At this moment, du Portail's study door was suddenly

opened, and a fair, slender woman, with a countenance of angelic sweetness, stepped hastily into the room. In her arms lay the form of an infant in swaddling clothes. "There!" said she, "that naughty Katt declared that it was not the doctor, but I knew well enough; I did, that I had seen him come in! No, doctor," she continued, addressing Cérizet, "I am not satisfied with the little one's health, not at all; she is very pale, and much thinner. I think she must be cutting her teeth."

Du Portail motioned to Cérizet to enter into the part so abruptly thrust upon him, which reminded him of having momentarily thought of assuming it once before, in the famous Cardinal comedy. "To be sure," he therefore answered, "the child is teething. They always ail a little at that time, but, my dear Madame, there are really no alarming symptoms."

"Do you think so, doctor," said the mad woman (for the reader has no doubt recognized Lydie, du Portail's ward). "But look at its poor little arms; how they are going to waste!"

And, unpinning the bundle in her arms, she showed a parcel of rags, which to the poor creature represented a pretty pink-and-white baby.

"Oh, no! not at all," Cérizet reassured her. "She is a little thinner, it is true, but the flesh is firm and the complexion good."

"Poor little darling," said Lydie, kissing her idol effusively, "I really think she is a little better since this morning. But what ought I to give her, doctor? She refuses pap, and she does not like broth either."

"Well, then, you may try some bread and milk. Has she a taste for sweet things?"

"Oh, yes," said the lunatic, whose face brightened up, "she loves them! But would chocolate be good for her."

"Certainly, certainly. But no vanilla in it; that is too heating."

"I see," said Lydie, "it must be what they call 'health chocolate.'" She spoke in the tone of a mother listening to a doctor as though he were a divine being. "Uncle," she added, turning to du Portail, "do ring for Bruno, and send him for a few pounds of chocolate at once."

"Bruno has just gone out," answered her guardian. "But there is no hurry, he will go in the course of the day."

"Look, she is going to sleep," said Cérizet, not sorry to put an end to a scene which, despite his callous nature, was pathetic to him.

"So she is," said the insane girl, wrapping up the bundle and rising, "and I must put her to bed. Good-by, doctor. It is very kind of you to come so often without being sent for. If you only knew how unhappy we poor mothers are, and what good a few words do us! Oh, but she is crying again."

"That is natural enough," said Cérizet, "she is deadly sleepy; she would be better off in her cradle."

"I will go and play her the sonata by Beethoven that her father liked so much. It is surprising how soothing that is. So good-by, doctor," said she, stopping once more on the threshold, "good-by, dear doctor," and she kissed her hand to him.

Cérizet was quite overcome.

"Did I not tell you," sighed du Portail, "she was an angel? Never cross, never a hard word! Sometimes she is melancholy, but always as the result of maternal anxiety.

It is this which convinces the physicians that if the reality took the place of her constant hallucination, her reason might return. There, you see, is what that fool of a la Peyrade is refusing, and a splendid dowry into the bargain! But he shall be persuaded—I will stake my reputation on it! Listen," he added, hearing some chords struck on the piano, "listen what talent she has! As for lunatics of that sort, why there are thousands of sane women inferior to them, and only more sensible on the surface." When the Beethoven sonata, played with such fine feeling and perfection of artistic shading as to fill the copyist with wonder and admiration, had come to a close:

"I am of your opinion, sir," he said. "La Peyrade is rejecting an angel, a treasure, a pearl, and if I were in his shoes—but he must be brought round, as you have planned. Henceforth, it is not with zeal I shall serve you, but with passion, with the blindest devotion."

As Cérizet was uttering this vow of fidelity on his way out of the room, he heard a female voice, which certainly was not Lydie's.

"Is my dear Commandeur in his study," said the voice, with a slightly foreign accent.

"Yes, Madame, but kindly step into the drawing-room, Monsieur is not alone. I will go and announce you."

This time it was the voice of Katt, the old Dutch housekeeper.

"Come, go out this way," said du Portail hastily to Cérizet, as he opened a secret door, which took him out upon the landing by a dark passage.

The article introducing the new management of a newspaper to the public, "the confession of faith," as it is techni-

cally styled, is always a laborious and difficult task. In this case, besides announcing the general policy of the paper, which was necessary to foreshadow Thuillier's candidature, the draft of this manifesto, after being revised by la Peyrade, was discussed at length and breadth. Cérizet was present at the debate, having, in accordance with du Portail's instructions, accepted the managership. However, he had not yet deposited the security, profiting by the latitude usually allowed by new owners. Cunningly fanned by the arch-rogue, who began by flattering Thuillier, this discussion soon grew stormy, and took an acrid tone. But, as by agreement, la Peyrade was always to render a final decision on all editorial questions, he used his authority to have the article printed just as he had written it. Thuillier was incensed at what he called an abuse of power, and the next day, while alone with Cérizet, and pouring his troubles into the bosom of the faithful manager, an occasion offered itself quite readily at first hand to broach the slanderous revelations plotted with the old man of the Rue Honoré-Chevalier.

The insinuation was most artfully pointed, and a cleverer man than Thuillier would have succumbed to the deception. Cérizet pretended to be frightened at having betrayed the secret, drawn from him in the fervor of his zeal, and by his sympathy commanded by Thuillier's "elevation of mind and character, which had struck him from the very first." The dandy of the Empire quieted his anxiety, promising that he should on no account be involved in any complications which his avowal might lead to. Thuillier would be supposed to have got the information from another source, and if necessary he would let the suspicion rest upon Dutocq. Leaving the dart in the wound, Cérizet went away to make

some necessary arrangements for the final settlement of his security.

The installing of the "Echo de la Bièvre" in the Rue Saint-Dominique-d'Enfer was only at a rudimentary stage, since the change was being made in a hurry. The old offices were in a house of the meanest appearance, evidently not habitable, and in the receipt for the fixings and furniture, included in the documents of sale, Thuillier met with sad disappointments. The inventory in question was conceived in terms something like these:

1. Three tables of stained black wood.
2. Six straw-bottomed chairs.
3. A case of pigeon-holes, also in black wood, for keeping a file of the newspaper.
4. A stone cistern covered with wicker work, rather old-fashioned, but easily holding five pails of water.
5. Three candlesticks and a pair of snuffers.
6. A decanter and two glasses.
7. Nine empty bottles (which, to judge by their labels, might have once contained *real* Jamaica rum and the *genuine* Swiss absinthe).

But what most conspicuously stamped the establishment was a cupboard in the editorial room plentifully stored with turf, large squares of turf, dry, compact, and durable, merchandise, in fact, of the first order, which showed plainly the activity of the shareholding proprietors.

When Thuillier went to the office, he found la Peyrade at his editor's post. But within a quarter of an hour, the barrister experienced much annoyance at the high hand he was taking with regard to the choice of articles and contributors.

Prompted by his family, as usual, and by way of sequel

to his appointment on the reading committee of the Odéon, Phellion had come to offer himself as dramatic editor.

"My dear sir," he began, addressing himself to la Peyrade, after having inquired about Thuillier's health, "I used to go to the play a great deal in the time of my youth. The stage has all through my long career continued to have a particular attraction for me, and the white hairs which to-day crown my forehead seem no obstacle to my enriching your interesting periodical with the fruit of my studies and experience. As a member of the reading committee of the Odéon Theatre, I am, moreover, in touch with the new authors, and, if I might rely on your discretion, I might go so far as to say that I might not impossibly find among my papers a certain tragedy called 'Sapor,' which in my palmy days earned the approval of friends to whom it was read."

"But why," answered la Peyrade, trying to gild the pill of refusal he was about to administer, "why not offer the play for performance? We might be of assistance to you in such an enterprise."

"Of course," said Thuillier, "a theatrical manager to whom we might recommend your drama."

"No," answered Phellion, "first of all, as member of the reading committee of the Odéon, and then being called upon to judge others, it would not be proper for me to descend into the arena myself. I am an old gladiator, whose part it is to pronounce upon the strokes he can no longer deliver himself. In this sense, dramatic criticism is quite within my capacity, the more so as I think I have some new ideas about editing a theatrical department. According to my limited scope of view, the motto *Castigat ridendo mores* should be the great law, or rather let us say the only law

of the drama. I should, therefore, prove unrelentingly severe toward those works which are purely imaginary, which do not bear at all upon morality, and which the prudence of a mother of a family—"

"Pardon me," said la Peyrade, "if I interrupt you. But before allowing you to take so much trouble in outlining your ideas, I have to confess that we have already made arrangements for our dramatic criticisms."

"Oh, that alters the case," replied Phellion.

"Yes," put in Thuillier, "we have some one else. We were far from hoping that you would make us the flattering offer of contributing."

"Very well, then," said Phellion, now become a schemer, for the journalistic atmosphere has something mysterious about it that goes to men's heads, and especially if they are of the middle class, "since you believe my pen might be of service to you, perhaps a variety of stray reflections on different subjects, which would come under the heading of 'Thoughts By the Way,' might create some interest."

"Yes," said la Peyrade, with malice unperceived by Phellion, "such thoughts as might be in the style of la Rochefoucauld or la Bruyère. What do you say to it, Thuillier?"

He had reserved himself the right of leaving the responsibility of refusals to the respected proprietor as far as possible.

"I should say," answered Thuillier, "that reflections, especially if simply detached, would not be read much."

"Of course," said Phellion eagerly, "it implies a great wealth of subjects, which the author treats of without attempting to weld them into a whole."

"Would you propose to sign your name in every case?" asked la Peyrade.

"By no means!" cried Phellion, frightened. "I should not like to put myself on exhibition in that way."

"Your bashfulness, which I fully appreciate and approve," replied la Peyrade, "settles the matter conclusively. Stray reflections are an entirely individual mode of expression, which must positively be personified over a name. You see for yourself—'Thoughts By the Way, by Mister Three Stars'; that conveys nothing to the public."

Seeing that Phellion was preparing to raise other objections, Thuillier, who was in a hurry to pick his crow with the Provençal, made up his mind to cut the discussion short.

"My dear Phellion," he therefore said, "you must excuse us if we cannot avail ourselves of the pleasure of your conversation any longer, but I have a very important article to talk about with la Peyrade, and you know, in making up a newspaper, the time does go like the devil! So, if you would be kind enough to postpone this affair until another day— Madame Phellion is well, I hope?"

"Very well, thank you," answered the great citizen, rising, and without seeming offended by the dismissal. "When may one expect the first issue? It is eagerly looked forward to in the district."

"To-morrow, I think," said Thuillier, walking to the door with him, "our profession of faith will appear, and it is high time. You shall have a copy of the paper, my friend, and you will call again soon, will you not? Bring your manuscript with you; la Peyrade was perhaps a little too stiff."

Having poured this balm into the wound of the departing Phellion, Thuillier rang for the office boy. "Would you know that gentleman again, who has just gone out," Brigitte's brother asked him.

"Yes, sir, he's got a funny enough phiz for that. It's Monsieur Phellion, isn't it? I've let him in heaps of times," said Coffinet.

"Very well. Whenever he comes I am not in, and neither is Monsieur de la Peyrade. Remember this rule, which is to be strictly observed. You may go now."

No sooner were la Peyrade and Thuillier settled down than Coffinet put his head in at the door again.

"Monsieur," said he to the barrister, "there are two ladies wishing to see you."

"What ladies?"

"Two very well dressed ladies—look like mother and daughter. The daughter is handsome."

"Shall I have them in here," la Peyrade asked Thuillier, "or shall I see them in the anteroom?"

"Since they have been told you are in, let them come in here; but try to get rid of them as quickly as possible."

And the proprietor of the "Echo de la Bièvre" began walking up and down, with his hands clasped on his back, like Napoleon.

Coffinet's opinion of the dresses of the two visitors, who now made their appearance, was very much subject to revision. A woman is well dressed, not when she wears rich and costly things, but when her attire, which may even be quite simple, shows a perfect harmony of shape and color, and is entirely appropriate to the wearer's personality. Now, a hat with a very narrow brim—called *bibi* in the slang of the day—trimmed with tall flowers and set so far back as to seem a protection for the shoulders rather than a frame to the face; a huge French cashmere shawl, worn with the awkwardness and inexperience of a bride; a silk plaid dress, with a heavy pattern and three rows of flounces;

far too many chains and charms, but irreproachable gloves and boots—such was the costume of the younger woman. As to the other, whom her slender companion had in tow, as it were, she was short and of wide circumference, and wore a dress, a shawl, and a bonnet which a practiced eye would have discerned to be of second-hand origin. It is on this economical plan that actresses' mothers—of whom an unutterable specimen now stood before la Peyrade—are always dressed. Condemned to do duty for two generations, the clothes they wear, contrary to their natural destiny, ascend instead of descending.

"Whom have I the honor of speaking to?" asked la Peyrade, politely proffering chairs.

"Monsieur," replied the younger person, who had unceremoniously pushed in first, "I am introducing myself on the strength of my acquaintance with one of your colleagues at the bar, Monsieur Minard."

"Ah, indeed!" said the Provençal; "and in what matter does he especially desire me to assist you?"

"Monsieur, I am a dramatic artist, and I first walked the boards in this district, which leads me to hope that a local paper will be kind to me. I have just left the Luxembourg Theatre, where I was leading lady for some time."

"And you are now—?"

"At the Folies-Dramatiques."

"You are to appear soon?"

"Yes, in a fairy pantomime, in which I wear five different costumes—as a page, a little drummer-boy of the Imperial Guard, a great coquette, a witch on a broomstick, and the fairy Lilacblossom; that's at the end, among flames of red and blue fire."

"Well, Mademoiselle," said la Peyrade, "I will ask our dramatic editor to devote particular attention to your first appearance."

"Yes—and to give her a little encouragement, please," coaxed Madame Cardinal. "The child is so young! And besides, though it's not for me to say it, I can swear she works day and night!"

"Mother," said Olympe authoritatively, "I shall be judged by my merits. It is enough if Monsieur promises to have my first appearance noticed. At the Folies-Dramatiques so many pieces are given that are not mentioned by the press, but being, as I said, a native of this district—"

"Very good, Mademoiselle," said la Peyrade, conclusively. "Is my brother barrister, Monsieur Minard, quite well?"

"Surely! He spent the evening at our house last night, rehearsing my part with me."

"Present my compliments to him, pray," said la Peyrade, as he escorted the visitors to the door.

Olympe Cardinal went out first, as she had come in, leaving a space between herself and her mother, who waddled after her laboriously, of about twenty yards.

"Not at home to any one!" shouted Thuillier to the office boy, slamming the door and pushing the bolt. "Now, my dear fellow, we can talk," Thuillier began ironically, having heard that nothing so confused an adversary. "I have heard something which will please you. I know why *my* pamphlet was seized." And he looked at la Peyrade fixedly.

"Your pamphlet was seized because they wanted to seize it, of course," said the other airily. "They sought and they

found. His Majesty's officials always do find 'subversive doctrines' when they are looking for them."

"No, you are mistaken. The seizure was prearranged, preconcerted, plotted beforehand."

"By whom?"

"The scheme was concocted between those who wanted to kill the Treatise, and the wretches who promised to act as traitors."

"In any case," remarked the barrister, "the purchasers were not making a brilliant bargain; for, although you have been prosecuted, I cannot see that your work has made a great sensation."

"But what about the sellers—the betrayers?" inquired Thuillier, with redoubled irony.

"The sellers had the better judgment."

"Oh, yes, I know you think a lot of cleverness; but allow me to observe that the police, whose hand I see very plainly in this affair, is not famous for throwing money out of the window." And he looked at la Peyrade again.

"So," went on Théodose, without blinking, "you think you have found out that the police traded in advance for the suppression of your pamphlet?"

"Yes, and I know positively what amount was paid to the individual who had charge of that tidy transaction."

"As to the person, I might possibly guess who it was by taking a little time. But I have no idea how much money was involved."

"Very well, then, I can tell you how much. Twenty-five thousand francs," said Thuillier, with emphatic accentuation, "is what Judas was paid. You understand me, Monsieur de la Peyrade?"

"Of course," answered the Provençal, in a voice hoarse

with emotion, "I ought to have known that I could not bring a serpent in here and escape its venomous bite! You poor fool, do you not see that you are merely the echo of one of Cérizet's calumnies?"

"It is not a question of Cérizet at all, who has told me a great deal of good about you. But tell me this: how did you, being without a sou the day before, manage to count out twenty-five thousand francs to Dutocq the next day?"

La Peyrade reflected for a moment. "No," said he, "it was not Dutocq who told you. He is not the man to make an enemy of such as myself, without adequate and substantial results. The miserable informer is Cérizet, from whose clutches I rescued you the Madeleine house. It is Cérizet, whom, in my long-suffering patience, I took from his dunghill, to give an honorable position! It is that vile creature, whom every kindness only incites to another misdeed! If you knew what the man was, you would be nauseated with utter disgust. He is a discoverer of new worlds in the universe of infamy!"

This time Thuillier spoke with subtlety.

"I know nothing about Cérizet excepting through yourself. You represented him as being a manager of the most desirable kind. But if he were as black as the devil, and supposing the information did come from him, that would make you none the whiter, my boy."

"No doubt I was wrong to send him to you; but we wanted a man familiar with the working of a newspaper, and he had that qualification. Can one ever plumb the depths of such characters? I thought him reformed. A manager, after all, I said to myself, is prison carrion, a writing machine. I thought I had at least found the ma-

terial for a dummy in him. I was mistaken; he will never be anything but a mud-cart."

"All that is very fine, but those twenty-five thousand francs, which were so conveniently at hand, where did you get them from? The explanation of that you still owe me."

"If you must know," replied la Peyrade, "those twenty-five thousand francs were the savings of a servant who asked me to take care of the money and pay her interest."

"A servant with twenty-five thousand francs saved! Pooh! What a grand house she must have served in!"

"Quite the contrary, she was housekeeper to an infirm old professor, and it was just because her possession of such a sum seemed so strange that she was anxious to leave it in my hands as a sort of trustee."

"Really, my friend," laughed Thuillier scathingly, "if I were in want of material for a novel I should go to you! The imagination you have, in all conscience!"

"What," said la Peyrade sharply, "you do not believe me?"

"No, I do not believe you. Twenty-five thousand francs saved in the service of an old professor! It is just as credible as the officer in the 'Dame Blanche' buying a castle out of his pay."

"But what if I prove the truth of my statement? What if I let you put your finger on it?"

"In that case, I shall, like Saint Thomas, lower my standard before your evidence. But you will allow me to wait, my noble friend, until you have actually given the proof you speak of."

Thuillier was splendid in his pride—"I would give two louis," said he to himself, "if Brigitte were here to see how I am handling him."

"Now, suppose," said la Peyrade, "that without leaving this office, and by the means of a message written before your eyes, I made the person from whom I got that money come here, and confirm my words, what should you say then?"

This proposition, and the tone of self-confidence in which it was made, caused Thuillier no little surprise.

"That would alter things," said he, changing his note. "But you will do it to-day? Right on the spot?"

"Without going out of this room, I told you. It seems to me that was plain enough."

"Who is to deliver the letter which you are going to write?" asked Thuillier, who, by dwelling on every detail, imagined he was evincing colossal perspicacity. "Who is to take the letter?"

"Why, your office boy, whom you will order to do so yourself."

"Well, then, write it," said Thuillier, determined to drive his man to the wall.

La Peyrade took a sheet of paper, and, as he wrote, read out aloud:

"Madame Lambert is requested to come at once, in an urgent matter, to the office of the 'Écho de la Bièvre' newspaper, Rue Saint-Dominique-d'Enfer, whither the bearer will conduct her. She is impatiently awaited by her

"Obedient servant,

"THEODOSE DE LA PEYRADE."

"Now, does this suit you?" said the barrister, passing over the letter to Thuillier.

"Entirely," he answered, taking the precaution to fold it himself, and seal it up in an envelope.

"Put the address on, please," returning it to the other man.

Thuillier then rang for Coffinet.

"You will at once," said he, "take this to its address, and bring back the lady."

After a short lapse of time, the office boy opened the door and ushered in Madame Lambert, whom he had found at home, and who entered the room in a somewhat excited state of mind.

"You are Madame Lambert?" Thuillier asked in a magisterial tone.

"Yes, sir," answered the pietist, in an uncertain voice.

After asking her to sit down, and seeing that the office boy had remained, and was apparently waiting for further orders, he said—"That will do; you may go. And let no one else in."

Thuillier's grave and sovereign demeanor had but increased Madame Lambert's apprehensions. She had supposed that she would have to deal with la Peyrade only, and now found herself confronted by a severe-looking stranger, while the barrister, who had merely bowed to her, proffered not a word. Not only this, but the scene of action was a newspaper office, and everybody knows that, especially for religious bigots, everything connected with the press has an infernal and devilish color.

"Now, then, my dear fellow," said Thuillier to the barrister, "it seems to me there is nothing to hinder you from communicating to Madame the reason of your having sent for her."

In order to leave Thuillier no grain of suspicion, la Peyrade decided to attack the woman abruptly, and without forewarning her.

"We were going to ask you, Madame, whether it is not true that, about two months and a half ago, you put a round sum into my hands of twenty-five thousand francs, to be invested at interest by me?"

Although she felt Thuillier's and the Provençal's eyes upon her, Madame Lambert was unable, in the face of this pointblank question, to refrain from starting up.

"Oh, my Lord and Saviour!" she exclaimed, "twenty-five thousand francs! Where should I have got so much money from?"

La Peyrade's face did not exhibit the disappointment one would have expected, and Thuillier was now looking at him compassionately, as it were.

"You see, my friend—" he began.

"You are quite sure," resumed the Provençal, "of never having deposited the sum of twenty-five thousand francs with me? You make that assertion? You still maintain it?"

"Oh, Monsieur, how should twenty-five thousand francs and a poor woman like myself ever have gone in at the same door together? What little I had, as every one knows, went into the housekeeping expenses of the dear old gentleman whose servant I have been for over twenty years."

"This," stated Thuillier pompously, "seems to me conclusive."

La Peyrade showed not a shadow of emotion. On the contrary, he seemed to be playing into Thuillier's hands.

"You hear what she says, and if necessary I could now call you to witness that Madame had no twenty-five thousand francs, and therefore could not have handed them to me. And since the notary Dupuis, with whom I was supposed to have deposited the cash in her name, made off to

Brussels this morning, with all his clients' funds, I have nothing to account to Madame for, and Dupuis's flight—"

"The notary Dupuis has run away?" cried Madame Lambert, aroused by this terrible news from her usual manner of Christian humility and resignation. "Well, who ever heard of such a pig? He was making fun of the Lord only this morning at Saint-Jacques' Cathedral!"

"No doubt," remarked la Peyrade, "he was praying for a safe journey."

"Monsieur is speaking very lightly," continued Madame Lambert, "but still, the thief is carrying off my savings, which I did in fact hand over to Monsieur, and Monsieur is responsible to me. I know no one in this matter but him!"

"Well," said La Peyrade to Thuillier, pointing to Madame Lambert, whose attitude was reminiscent of a she-wolf robbed of her young ones, "is that natural, or not? Do you think the lady and I have been playing a comedy for your benefit?"

"I am dumfounded," answered Thuillier, "by the audacity of that man Cérizet and dumfounded at my own stupidity. I have nothing to do but surrender on your own terms."

"Madame," said the Provençal, turning cheerfully to the pietist, "the notary Dupuis continues to be a godly man, and is incapable of taking a button from his clients. Your money is still safe with him. As for this gentleman here, to whom I merely wanted to prove that you had paid me the money, he is my second self, and your secret is in as good keeping with him as it always will be with me."

"Very well, sir," said Madame Lambert, relieved, "then I am not wanted here any longer?"

"No, my dear lady, and kindly forgive me for being obliged to give you such a fright."

Madame Lambert went away with all the semblance of humble respect.

"You see, my dear fellow," said Théodose to Thuillier, as soon as they were alone, "what it costs me to nurse your sick spirit. This debt was dormant; it was in a chronic state, and you have made it acute."

"I am heart-broken, my dear friend, over my foolish credulity! But do not let the importunity of that woman trouble you at any time. We can arrange about the affair, even if it were necessary to advance you the money out of the dowry."

"Anyhow, my good man, we must talk over existing conditions, with a view to reconstruction. I have no desire to submit to a fresh examination every morning, and just now, while we were waiting for the woman, I made out a little draft of something that we can discuss, and sign if you like, before the first number of the paper is issued."

"But our deed of partnership, it seems to me, is a charter which—"

"Which clause fourteen thereof allows you to cancel, by forfeiting a wretched five thousand francs. No thank you! We must devise something more binding than that!"

Just then Cérizet came in, with a gay, triumphant air.

"My masters," said he, "I bring you great riches, and in an hour the security will be signed, sealed, and delivered."

But observing that his news met with a very chilling reception, he asked what the matter was.

"The matter is," thundered Thuillier, "that I refuse to associate myself with double-faced slanderers, that we want neither you nor your money, and that I beg you will honor this place with your presence no further!"

"Hi! hi! hi!" exclaimed Cérizet, "Papa Thuillier has been putting his foot into it again!"

"Get out, sir!" roared Thuillier. "You have nothing more to do here!"

"It looks, my little man," said Cérizet to la Peyrade, "as if you had been sticking pins into this honest gentleman. He certainly did not invent the printing press, and as for you, we know what you can do. No matter, I think you were wrong in not calling on du Portail, and I am going to tell him—"

"Get out, sir!" repeated Thuillier, threateningly.

"After all, my dear sir," retorted the usurer, "it was not I who ran after you. The world went very well before you, and will go very well after you. Only try not to pay the twenty-five thousand out of your pocket, for it would make you look very silly!"

Which having said, Cérizet put away his pocketbook, containing twenty-three thousand francs in banknotes, and taking his hat from the table where he had put it down, carefully polished it with his sleeve, and went out.

Through trusting to Cérizet, Thuillier had been plunged into a most disastrous campaign. Having become la Peyrade's meek slave, he was obliged to accede to all his demands: Five hundred francs a month for the barrister's share of work on the newspaper; his contributions specially paid at the rate of fifty francs a column, an enormous price considering the small size of the paper; a pledge to continue the journal for six months, under pain of a forfeiture of fifteen thousand francs; absolute omnipotence stipulated in favor of the editor-in-chief, to whom was reserved the right of ordering, accepting, and rejecting any article, without being called upon to state his reasons for

so doing. Such were the ostensible conditions of the agreement drawn up in duplicate, and in *good faith*, between the parties.

But by virtue of a secret and signed understanding, Thuillier was held answerable for the twenty-five thousand francs which la Peyrade owed Madame Lambert, the aforesaid la Peyrade agreeing, in case of a marriage occurring between himself and Mademoiselle Céleste Colleville, and of the said sum having been previously disbursed by Thuillier, to acknowledge the sum as being received in advance out of his wife's dowry. In this way, the cunning Provençal contrived to circumvent the law, which allows no such advance payments on marriage portions. For what else was that sum of twenty-five thousand francs, which Thuillier was only sure of obtaining the equivalent for when the match was actually consummated?

The day of the first issue of the "Echo de la Bièvre," although it was not a Sunday, Brigitte had a great concourse of people in her drawing-room. Reconciled with la Peyrade, whom her brother had brought to dinner, the old maid declared that, flattery aside, his first article was "a tremendous hit." And, according to all the visitors, the public had hailed the paper with delight in the morning. What the public is we all know: the public of every man who shoots a squib at the universe is composed of five or six familiar friends, compelled, at the hazard of falling out with the author, to take cognizance of his lucubrations.

"I can truly say," exclaimed Colleville, "that it is the first political article I have read that has not sent me to sleep."

"Undoubtedly," said Phellion, "this article seems to bear the impress of an Attic vigor and wit, in vain to

be sought in the composition of ordinary public newspapers."

"Yes," agreed Dutocq, "it is very well done, and then the phrases are turned in a way that shows that it is no common style. I suppose that to-morrow the 'Echo de la Bièvre' will be violently attacked by the other papers."

"Just what we want," said Thuillier; "and if the government would do us the kindness to seize us—"

"Thank you, Mister Proprietor!" said Fleury, the new manager, whom Thuillier had also asked to dinner. "I should prefer not to be called upon quite so soon to—"

"Oh, as to being seized," interjected Dutocq, "you will never be seized; but I think the ministerial sheets will give it to you hot and strong."

The next morning, Thuillier was at the office of his paper by eight o'clock in the morning, so as to be in good time for the tremendous onslaught. After looking through all the newspapers, he found that there was no more mention of the "Echo de la Bièvre" than if it had not existed.

When la Peyrade arrived he found his unhappy friend in dire consternation.

"You are surprised, are you?" frankly said the Provençal. "I did not interrupt your illusions yesterday as to a warm engagement with the press, but I knew very well that this morning there would not be a single word about us. Is it not the case that against every paper which begins with some pretensions there is always for a fortnight, and sometimes even for a whole month, a *conspiracy of silence?*"

"A conspiracy of silence!" repeated Thuillier, lost in admiration. He did not know what it meant, but he saw something great in the phrase itself, something that appealed to the imagination. When la Peyrade had explained

to him that by a conspiracy of silence was to be understood a deliberate determination of already existing newspapers to disregard a new one, in order to avoid advertising it, Thuillier was hardly more satisfied than he had been in the first instance by the singing sonority of the phrase itself. Such is the man of the middle class: phrases are a currency that always passes without dispute. A phrase will rouse him to anger, or soothe him. He will resent or applaud it. A phrase is enough to make him embark on a revolution, and upset the government of his own choice.

But the paper was only the means; the end was Thuillier's candidature, which had been only hinted at in the first few issues. One morning, however, there appeared a letter in the columns of the "Echo" from some residents of the district, thanking their representative in the municipal council for the firm and generally liberal attitude he had maintained in standing for the people's interests. This letter, cleverly commented upon by la Peyrade in a leading article, was signed by Barbet and Métivier, both tenants of the house in the Rue Saint-Dominique, the second supplying, in fact, the paper for the "Echo"; almost all of Brigitte's tradesmen, from whom, in view of the approaching election, she had continued to buy since removing to the Madeleine quarter; Thuillier's doctor, chemist, and architect; and, finally, Barniol, Phellion's son-in-law, who professed advanced views. As to Phellion, he had thought its language too unmeasured, and, as ever, without fear and without reproach, though he feared his refusal might damage his son's matrimonial prospects, he had bravely abstained from signing.

This trial flight had the happiest results. The ten or twelve names thus put forward were supposed to express

the wish of the electors as a whole, and was called "the voice of the district." Furthermore, Thuillier's chances were made to look so favorable that Minard hesitated to stand as a candidate in opposition to him.

Enchanted at the turn things were taking, Brigitte was the first to say that the marriage question must now be settled, and Thuillier coincided with her, the more so as he feared from moment to moment he would be called upon to pay the sum he had guaranteed. The atmosphere was thoroughly cleared between the Provençal and the old maid. She concealed none of the fears from him that she had conceived as to his autocratic rulership, should a *son-in-law* of his mental and moral composition come into the house. "If we were going to quarrel," said she, "it would be better to keep house separately from the start, which would not leave us worse friends than we were before."

La Peyrade answered that he would not allow such an arrangement for anything in the world. Quite to the contrary, he was counting, as an earnest of future comfort and happiness, upon the perfect safety and good order of his household affairs under the guiding hand of Brigitte. He would be fully occupied with important professional duties, and would of course not presume to intermeddle in details of which he was not at all competent to judge. In brief, he reassured and convinced her so completely that she asked him to take the necessary steps for the publication of the banns without delay, reserving to herself the task of preparing Céleste for the coming event, and undertaking to bring her to lamblike submission.

"My little girl," said she one morning to Céleste, "I suppose you have given up the notion of becoming Félix Phellion's wife? In the first place, he is more of an atheist

than ever, and you have seen for yourself that his head is going wrong. At Madame Minard's you have seen Madame Marmus, who married a professor, a member of the Legion of Honor, and even of the Institute of France. There is no unhappier woman in the world. Her husband has lodged her behind the Luxembourg, in a dingy little street that is neither paved nor lighted. When he goes out he does not know where he is walking, and arrives at the Champs de Mars, when the Faubourg Poissonière is his destination. He is not able to give his address to a cabman; he is always so abstracted that he cannot tell you whether it is before dinner or after. So you can imagine what sort of time a woman would have with people who were always looking through telescopes at the stars."

"But Félix," objected Céleste, "is not so abstracted as all that."

"No doubt, because he is much younger; but with advancing years his abstraction will certainly grow with his atheism. We are all agreed that he is not the right husband for you—your mother, your father, Thuillier, and myself—and all of us who have any common-sense in the house have decided that you are to select la Peyrade, a man of the world, who will make a name for himself, who has done us great services, and who is to make your godfather a deputy. We are disposed to give you, on his account, a dowry such as we certainly should not provide for another man. So, you understand, the banns will be published, and this day week we shall sign the marriage contract. There will be a grand dinner for the relations and friends, and afterward an evening party, at which the contract and settlements will be signed, and at which your wedding outfit and your presents will be exhibited. As I shall manage it all, I can answer

for its being done in proper style, especially if you are not childish, and follow our ideas like a good girl."

"But, Aunt Brigitte—" timidly murmured Céleste.

"There are no 'buts' and no 'ifs,'" imperiously rejoined the old maid. "It must be just as I say, and unless you should happen, my fine young lady, to think you know better than all your relations—"

"I will do anything you wish, aunt," answered Céleste, who felt as though a thundercloud were about to burst overhead, and knew that she had not the strength to resist the iron woman whose edict had just gone forth.

At once going off to pour her sorrows into her godmother's bosom, and hearing herself counselled to be patient and resigned, the poor child thought that in this quarter there was no support to be expected, and no encouragement to offer the slightest resistance, and she therefore made up her mind that the sacrifice was an accomplished fact.

Throwing herself with frenzied zeal into the new occupation thus brought into her life, Brigitte set vigorously to work to get clothes made for the bride, and to buy presents. Like all misers, who on great occasions change their habits and character, the old maid thought nothing good enough, and flung her money about so freely that up to the day of the signing of the contract the jeweller, the milliner, the seamstress, the upholsterer, all from the most noted establishments, were Brigitte's permanent guests.

"It is like a procession," said Joséphine the cook to Françoise from the Minards'; "the bell goes from morning until night."

The dinner was ordered at Chabot and Potel's, and not at Chevet's. This was to demonstrate Brigitte's indepen-

dence of spirit, and her emancipation from the errors of Madame de Godollo. The party was thus made up: three Thuilliers and three Collevilles, including the bride; la Peyrade, Dutocq and Fleury, the manager of the "Echo de la Bièvre," whom he had asked to be the witnesses, the very small number of his friends leaving him no choice; Minard and Rabourdin, the witnesses selected for Céleste; Madame and Mademoiselle Minard, and Minard junior; two of Thuillier's colleagues from the general council; Dupuis, the notary, who was to draw up the settlements; and, finally, the Abbé Gondrin, Madame Thuillier's and Céleste's spiritual adviser, who was to pronounce the nuptial benediction.

When they sat down to table, three guests were still missing: the two Minards, father and son, and the notary Dupuis. This lawyer had written a line to Thuillier, in the morning, to say that he was not to expect him at dinner, but that at nine o'clock precisely he would be in the drawing-room with the papers, when he would be at Mademoiselle Thuillier's orders. Julien Minard was excused by his mother, who said he was kept to his room by a bad sore throat. Minard senior's absence—his wife and daughter arriving without him—remained unexplained, and as the time was going by, Madame Minard, assuring the hosts that her husband would join the company, urged them not to wait for him. Brigitte ordered the soup to be kept warm for him, because, according to middle class ideas, a dinner without soup is not a dinner. The meal was not especially lively, and if the fare was better than at the famous banquet improvised at the election for the general council, the greater was the contrast in point of spirit and spontaneity in the conversation.

The absence of the three guests aforesaid was the first reason of depression. Besides, Flavie was in a mournful mood, having seen la Peyrade again, and having gone through a fearful scene with him. Céleste, even if she had been happy in the choice made for her, could not in obedience to propriety have displayed her feelings freely. As it was, she took little pains to show a bright face, and did not even care to look at her godmother, whose countenance, so to speak, looked like a long bleat. The poor child feared that a look exchanged between them would bring tears to her eyes. Thuillier was mutely wrapped up in his own importance, and Brigitte, no longer amid surroundings where her sway was undisputed, also showed awkward embarrassment. Colleville attempted to raise the temperature of the assembly by some jocularities, but in the circle where he vented them his somewhat coarse pleasantries had the effect of laughter in a sick room, and silent hints from Thuillier, la Peyrade, and Madame Colleville put a damper on his gayety and turbulently expansive humor. Curious it was, that the gravest member of the party, seconded by Rabourdin, succeeded in making the atmosphere more genial. A man of the most refined and cultivated mind, the Abbé Gondrin, like all pure and well-regulated souls, had a fund of quiet mirth, which he knew how to communicate to others, and the first flush of animation made its appearance at the same time as Minard.

After making his excuses, alleging some business at the municipal office which brooked no delay, the glances he exchanged with his wife were calculated rather to indicate that his business had been very private. La Peyrade and Thuillier had been sent seats for the first performance of the "Télégraphe d'Amour," the great fairy pantomime in

which Olympe Cardinal was to appear, and they were little deceived on the score of Julien Minard's indisposition. They, in their turn, exchanged looks, after noticing the sign of intelligence between the spouses, and began to ask themselves whether young Minard's secret had not been unearthed, and whether the mayor of the eleventh district had not been detained so late in direct efforts to ascertain the nature of his son's misdemeanors. Minard, being in the habit of leading conversation everywhere, and supposing it his duty to conceal his domestic cares under the mask of a tranquil mind, said, as soon as he had hastily swallowed a few morsels, "Gentlemen, do you know the latest and greatest news?"

"What is it?" asked everybody with curiosity.

"The Academy of Science," he answered, "at its session to-day, received a communication regarding a remarkable discovery. We now know that there is another star in the sky. What must lend a special interest to this great astronomical event, in the eyes of the ladies and gentlemen I have the honor of addressing, is that the discoverer is a resident of the twelfth district, which several of you still inhabit, or have inhabited for a long time. In fact, all the circumstances attending upon this grand scientific feat are extraordinary. The Academy was so thoroughly convinced of the existence of the star by the missive announcing it, that, upon closing, a deputation went to the domicile of the modern Galileo, to congratulate him in the name of the whole society, although the new star is visible neither to the naked eye, nor through the telescope. The pure force of calculation and reasoning alone has incontrovertibly established its existence, and its place in the firmament of heaven. And do you know, gentlemen, who this Chris-

topher Columbus of the new celestial world is? An old man three-quarters blind, and who can see just enough to find his way about."

"How splendid! How wonderful!" exclaimed every one. "And what is his name?" clamored several voices.

"Monsieur Picot, or, if you like, Father Picot, for so he is called in the whole Rue Val-de-Grâce, where he lives. He is only an old professor of mathematics, who, by the way, can boast some very good pupils. It happens to be Félix Phellion, whom you all know, and who studied under him, who in his old master's name read out the paper to the Academy."

At the mention of Félix, and recalling his promise of something in the sky, which she had taken for sheer madness, Céleste looked at Madame Thuillier, who showed a little cheerfulness, which seemed to say—"Courage, child, all is not lost!"

"My dear boy," said Thuillier to la Peyrade, "Félix is supposed to come here to-night. We must capture him and get a communication about the new star from him. It would be a great stroke for our 'Echo,' if we were the first to publish it."

"Indeed," said Minard, taking it upon himself to supply an answer, "it would be a great service to the public, since the affair will excite widespread interest, and create a great sensation. The deputation, not finding Monsieur Picot at home, at once waited upon the Minister of Public Instruction. The minister rushed off to the Tuileries, and the 'Messager,' in an extra edition this evening, which I read in my carriage on my way here, states that Monsieur Picot has been made a Knight of the Legion of Honor, and that a pension of eighteen hundred francs was granted him

from the fund for the encouragement of letters and the sciences."

"Now, there," said Thuillier, "is a Cross worthily bestowed."

"But a pension of eighteen hundred francs," demurred Dutocq, "seems to me rather paltry."

"Undoubtedly," rejoined Thuillier, "and the more so as this money, after all, belongs to the tax-payers, and when we see it constantly wasted on—"

"Eighteen hundred francs," broke in Minard, "is a good deal, nevertheless, especially for a man of science. Those people have scarcely any needs, and are accustomed to living on very little."

"I believe," said la Peyrade, "that our good Monsieur Picot does not lead a very regular life; for just at present his family, who first tried to get a commission in lunacy, are asking for legally appointed trustees, to take charge of his affairs. It is said that he has allowed himself to be cheated by a servant in his house. You know her, Thuillier, the woman who came to the newspaper the other day, and who had been told that Dupuis, the notary with whom she had deposited some money, had run away with it."

"Yes, yes, quite so, of course," assented Thuillier, emphatically; "you are right, I know her."

"How curious," remarked Brigitte, finding her opportunity to fortify the argument which, a few days before, the absent-mindedness of the Academician Marmus had afforded her, "that all these professors, apart from their learning, are no use for anything, and that in their own families they must be taken care of like children."

"That proves," said the Abbé Gondrin, "with what deep absorption they pursue their studies, and at the

same time shows a simplicity of character that is really affecting—"

He was interrupted by the noise of a violent altercation going forward in the antechamber.

"You must let me in, I tell you!" cried a voice.

"No, Monsieur, you shall not go in," a manservant was replying. "They are at dinner, as I have told you, and you cannot force your way into a private house in this manner."

Thuillier turned pale. Since the seizure of his pamphlet, he anticipated a descent of the police in every unusual visit.

Among other rules taught Brigitte by Madame de Godollo, one which had needed most repetition was, never to rise from the table where one is presiding as mistress of the house, unless when giving the signal for everybody to leave it. But the circumstances gave her an excuse—"I must go and see what it is," said she quickly to Thuillier, whose uneasiness she had noticed. "What is the matter?" she asked the servant, as soon as she arrived upon the scene of the conflict.

"The matter is, that this gentleman insists upon being admitted, saying that no one can be dining at eight o'clock."

"But who are you, sir?" said Brigitte to the rather singularly dressed old man, whose eyes were covered with a green shade.

"Madame, I am neither a beggar nor a barefooted ragamuffin," answered the old man, in a resounding tone of voice. "My name is Picot; I am a professor of mathematics."

"Rue Val-de-Grace?" asked Brigitte.

"Yes, number 9, next door to the fruiterer."

"Come in, Monsieur, come in, we shall only be too

happy to have you," exclaimed Thuillier, who, learning of his identity, had rushed out to ask the man of learning in.

"Now, then, you rascal," said the professor, turning upon the manservant, who was retiring now that everything was amicably settled, "didn't I tell you I would go in?"

Father Picot, a tall man of severe and angular countenance, and who, in spite of the mitigating blond wig with large curls and the peaceful eye-shade which we have already mentioned, exhibited truculent and aggressive traits in his bold features, deadly pale from unremitting study. He had given sufficient proof of his irritability before he had even appeared in the dining-room, where every one rose to greet him. He wore an enormous garment, something between an overcoat and a dressing-gown, under which a massive, iron-gray cloth waistcoat, garnished with a double row of buttons from top to bottom (military style), formed a sort of breastplate. His trousers, although October was drawing to its close, were of black "lasting" cloth, and betokened their length of service by two shining slabs in the region of the knees. But the most striking detail of the old man's dress was a pair of Patagonian feet incased in felt shoes, which, outlining the shape of mountainously protruding, gigantic bunions, involuntarily called to one's mind the back of a dromedary or a case of advanced elephantiasis.

Once installed in the chair offered him with effusive politeness, and after all the company was reseated, in the midst of the silence created by curiosity the old man shouted with a voice of thunder—"Where is he? Where is that good-for-nothing, that scamp? Let him show himself, if he dare! Let him speak, if he dare!"

"With whom are you so angry?" asked Thuillier, in a conciliatory tone, which at the same time was rather patronizing.

"A rascal whom I did not find at home, sir, and whom I was told was in this house. I am at Monsieur Thuillier's, am I not, member of the general council, Place Madeleine, second story?"

"Quite so, Monsieur," responded Thuillier, "and I may add that you have the respect and sympathy of all here assembled."

"And you will, no doubt," chimed in Minard, "permit the mayor of the district adjoining your own to congratulate himself on being in the presence of Monsieur Picot, the gentleman, of course, who has just made his name immortal by the discovery of a new star?"

"Yes, Monsieur," answered the professor, lifting up the stentorian diapason of his voice again, "I am Picot—the man you mean. But I have discovered no star. I pay no attention to such fads. My eyes are worn-out, and the impudent fellow I came here in search of has been playing a joke on me. The coward is hiding somewhere, and is afraid to say a word in front of me!"

"But who is this person with whom you are so angry?" the terrible old man was asked by several of the guests at once.

"An unnatural disciple, a thorough rascal—very clever, though—and his name is Félix Phellion."

The astonishment of the company may readily be imagined. Thinking the situation amusing, Colleville and la Peyrade burst out laughing.

"You are laughing, you miserable creature," exclaimed the irate mathematician, getting up. "Why don't you come

and laugh within arm's-length of me?" Brandishing an enormous walking-cane with a porcelain knob, he nearly knocked one of the candlesticks on the table against Madame Minard's head.

"You have been misinformed, Monsieur," said Brigitte, catching his arm. "Monsieur Félix Phellion is not here; he may possibly arrive in time for the evening party we are giving, but he is not here yet."

"Your evening parties do not begin early," said the old man; "it is past eight o'clock. But since you expect Monsieur Félix, you will allow me to wait for him here. You were in the middle of dinner, I believe—don't let me disturb you." Upon which he calmly sat down again.

"With your permission, Monsieur," said Brigitte, 'we will continue, or rather finish, since we were at dessert. May I offer you anything, a glass of champagne and a biscuit?"

"That will suit me very well, Madame. No one ever refuses champagne, and I have no objection to taking refreshments between meals. Only, it seems to me you dine very late."

Room was made at the table between Colleville and Mademoiselle Minard, and the musician undertook to keep his new neighbor's glass replenished. A plate of little cakes was also put before him.

"Monsieur," then said la Peyrade in a wheedling tone, "you see how surprised we all are at your complaining of Monsieur Félix Phellion, such a quiet, inoffensive young man. What has he been doing to you, to make you so deeply incensed at him?"

His mouth full of pastry, which he was making away with in quantities alarming to Brigitte, the professor mo-

tioned that he was going to answer, and after taking the wrong glass and emptying Colleville's—"What has the rascal done to me?" he said. "He has committed crimes against me bad enough to hang for, and this is not the first he is guilty of. He knows very well, as all my pupils do, that I detest stars. And the deputation that came to congratulate me may think itself lucky that I was not at home, for I can assure you that those fine academicians would have spent a very unpleasant quarter of an hour!"

"However, Monsieur Picot," resumed Monsieur Minard, "Phellion was only culpable in so far as he ascribed his discovery to yourself, and it seems to me that his bad behavior brought some compensation with it, the Cross of the Legion of Honor, a pension, and the renown which will attach to your name."

"I will take the Cross and the pension," said the old man, emptying his glass, which he then, to Brigitte's great terror, put down with such violence as to break the stem. "The government has been owing me both for twenty years, not for discovering stars—I have always despised that article—but for my 'Theory of Perpetual Motion,' four volumes, quarto, illustrated, Paris, 1825. You see, sir, that an attempt to award me fame is like pouring water into a river. I stood so little in need of Monsieur Phellion's assistance toward holding my position in the world of science that I expelled him in disgrace long ago."

"Then, this is not the first time he has played you a trick with a star?" asked Colleville humorously.

"He has done much worse than that!" shouted the old mathematician. "He has destroyed my reputation; he has tarnished my honor! My theory of 'Perpetual Motion,' which it cost me my eyes to publish, would have made my

fortune and given me immortality, if it had been printed at the royal printing-office. That wretched Félix spoiled the whole thing. From time to time, the young sycophant would say, pretending to have relations with my publisher: 'Papa Picot, it is selling very well, your book is. Here are five hundred francs (or fifty crowns, or sometimes even a thousand francs) which your bookseller has asked me to remit to you.' These tactics went on for years, and the bookseller, who was vile enough to enter into the plot, used to tell me when I looked in at his shop: 'Oh, yes, it is not going badly at all, it is moving along nicely, and the first edition will soon be sold out.' Suspecting nothing, I pocketed the money, and said to myself: 'My book is taking; my ideas are spreading little by little, and some day I may expect to see some great capitalists come and make proposals to me for the application of my system.' Lulled in false security, I did nothing at all for the circulation of my book, which was supposed to be selling itself, when, after six years, I found out that nine copies had been bought altogether. Thus was I made the victim of jealousy and dark malice, and wickedly despoiled of the fruits of my labors."

"But," asked Minard, acting as spokesman for the inward thought of the whole assembly, "is not a very ingenious and delicate plan discernible there—?"

"Of bestowing alms on me, eh?" interrupted the professor, with a yell that made Mademoiselle Minard jump from her chair; "of humiliating me, of heaping obloquy upon me —upon me, his old master? Do I look as if I wanted charity?"

Brigitte, who was in fear and trembling, on account of her glasses, and whose nerves were giving way before the old gentleman's huge appetite for cakes and champagne,

now rose as a signal for adjournment to the drawing-room. Moreover, she had several times heard the bell ring, announcing the arrival of some of the guests for the evennig party. Intending to effect the transmigration of the old professor, Colleville pleasantly offered him his arm.

"No, Monsieur, allow me to remain where I am, not being dressed for an evening party. Besides, glaring lights hurt my eyes. I am not fond of making an exhibition of myself, and the scene between me and my pupil had best be enacted in private."

"Well, leave him here, then," said Brigitte to Colleville.

And nobody pressed the old fellow, who had unconsciously sunk in the esteem of all the guests. Only, before leaving him alone in the dining-room, the careful housekeeper took the precaution of moving any breakables out of his reach, and then inquired by way of civility—"Shall I send you some coffee?"

"I will take some, if you please, and some brandy, too."

"Oh, he takes everything!" said Brigitte to the manservant, as she left the room. And she instructed him to keep his eye on the old "maniac."

Entering the drawing-room, she saw that the Abbé Gondrin had become the centre of the encircling guests, and, drawing near, she heard him say—"Never in my life have I met with an example of more touching and ingenious devotion. Not to let the left hand know what the right hand is doing, that is going far toward the principle of Christianity, but to sacrifice one's fame and make it another man's footstool, under such extraordinary conditions, with the probability of being denied, despised, and repulsed, that is carrying out the highest precepts of the Holy Gospel!

Would that I knew this noble young man, and that I might clasp hands with him!"

Her arm linked in her godmother's, Céleste was standing a few feet from the priest. Her ears drinking in his words, as he characterized Félix's generous conduct, she clung to Madame Thuillier's arm more closely, whispering—"You hear, godmother, you hear!"

To counteract the effect which the worthy divine's warm words of praise must inevitably have upon Céleste, Thuillier spoke thus—"Unfortunately, Monsieur l'Abbé, the young man whom you are giving such a grand name is not altogether a stranger to you. I have had occasion to speak with you about him, and have regretted our inability to carry out certain plans we had regarding him, owing to the very compromising independence of his religious views."

"Ah, it is the same young man?" asked the priest. "I am much astonished, and must say that the connection would not have occurred to me. But do not be alarmed, for, sooner or later, these elect souls always return to the fold, and however long these prodigal children should tarry on the road to God, I should never despair of His infinite mercy toward them." Upon which the Abbé looked about for his hat, with the intention of taking his departure. Just as he was about to steal away quietly, he was stopped by Minard.

"Monsieur," said the mayor of the eleventh district, "permit me the privilege of shaking hands with you, and of congratulating you upon the words of toleration which have fallen from your mouth. Ah! if all clergymen were like you, what conquests might religion not make! I have a family trouble myself at the present time, and must decide

upon a plan of conduct on which I should be glad of your advice and the assistance of your wisdom."

"Whenever you please," replied the Abbé, "at number 8, Rue de la Madeleine; after Mass, which I say at six o'clock, I am usually at home the whole morning."

The next day Minard called on the Phellions.

"My dear Félix!" exclaimed the mayor, shaking hands warmly with the young professor, "it is only on your account that I have come this morning; I want to offer you my congratulations!"

"What is it?" asked Phellion. "Have the Thuilliers at last seen fit to—?"

"Who is talking of the Thuilliers?" the mayor broke in. "But," he continued, fixing his eye on Félix, "do you mean to say the young dog has even concealed from yourself—?"

"I do not believe my son has ever hidden anything from me," said the great citizen.

"So that you are aware of the sublime astronomical discovery which he yesterday communicated to the Academy of Science?"

"Your kindness, Monsieur, has misled you," said Félix. "I was only the reader, not the author, of the document."

"Oh, that is absurd! Only the reader, indeed! I know the whole story!"

"But see," urged Félix, "here is the 'Constitutionnel,' which says that Monsieur Picot made the discovery, and also mentions the distinctions that were at once awarded him by the government."

"Félix is right," said Phellion. "The paper substantiates his statement, and I think the government has behaved very properly in this case."

"But, my dear major, I repeat that the whole story is out, and your son is all the more to be admired. Crediting his old master with his own discovery, in order to bring him recognition and reward by the authorities, that is a finer deed than I have heard of in all antiquity!"

"Félix," said Phellion senior, with signs of emotion, "these fearful tasks you have been working at for some time, these perpetual visits to the observatory—"

"But, my dear father, Monsieur Minard is mistaken!"

"Mistaken! When I have the whole affair from Monsieur Picot himself?"

This argument, thrown out in the most convincing manner, at last settled the question in Phellion's mind.

"Félix, my child!" he cried, going to his son with outstretched arms.

"And this is the man," exclaimed Madame Phellion, transported with delight, and likewise embracing her son, "over whom la Peyrade is given preference!"

"He is not preferred, Madame," said Minard. "Because the Thuilliers are not the dupes of this impostor, but he is forcing himself on them. Thuillier has taken it into his head that he cannot reach the deputy's chair without him—which he has not yet got, by the way—and has made up his mind to yield all else to that ambition."

"But how dreadful," ejaculated Madame Phellion, "to put one's ambition above the happiness of one's children!"

"My dear wife," answered Phellion, "let there be no bitterness of heart. The Lord in His goodness has sent us great comfort, and this marriage, which, I am sorry to say, Félix does not take as philosophically as he ought, may not occur after all."

The incredulous Félix shook his head.

"Yes," said Minard, "the major speaks true. Last night, when the settlements were to be signed there was a hitch. You were not there, but your absence was universally commented on."

"We were invited," said Phellion, "and up to the last moment were hesitating about going. You see, we were in a false position, and then Félix, after reading the paper before the Academy, was utterly exhausted by excitement and fatigue. To go without him would have been awkward, and we therefore pursued the prudent policy of staying at home."

Minard then related the singular Picot episode of the previous evening, and concluded by repeating the Abbé Gondrin's laudatory commendation of Félix's conduct, not forgetting to mention the desire which the young priest had expressed of meeting him.

"I will go to see him," said Félix. "Do you know where he lives?"

"Rue de la Madeleine, number eight," replied Minard. "I have just left him. I had a very delicate matter to put before him, and his counsels were as amiable as they were sound. But the great event of the evening was to be the reading of the marriage contract, in the presence of a numerous company, and the notary, after keeping us waiting for a good hour, never came!"

"Then," asked Félix eagerly, "the contract was not signed at all?"

"Not even read, my young friend. The announcement was suddenly made that the notary had left for Brussels."

"On some important business, no doubt," added Phellion, immediately.

"Oh, most important! A bill of bankruptcy of half a million of francs is all that he left behind."

"But who," demanded Phellion, "is this public official that has violated his sacred conscience in so scandalous a manner?"

"Why, your neighbor in the Rue Saint-Jacques, the notary Dupuis."

"What," said Madame Phellion, "such a pious man, and a churchwarden of the parish?"

"Don't you know, Madame," answered Minard, "that those are the very people to cover themselves with that sort of glory? And he is not the first."

"But this piece of news," said Phellion, "coming in the midst of a private party, must surely have had the effect of a thunderbolt."

"The more so," remarked the mayor, "as it was brought in the most singular and unexpected manner."

"Do tell us all about it!" said Madame Phellion, quite excited.

"It seems that the virtuous scoundrel had in his hands savings of a number of domestic servants, and that Monsieur de la Peyrade—for, you see, all those religious saints work together—was in the habit of recruiting capital among that class."

Here Madame Phellion interposed—"I always said that Provençal was not to be relied upon."

"He deposited with Dupuis, on account of an old housekeeper, a hypocrite like himself, a certain little amount, which was quite worth while—twenty-five thousand francs, if you please! And this housekeeper, Madame Lambert by name—"

"Twenty-five thousand francs in savings!" exclaimed

Félix. "I am not surprised that poor Father Picot was always so badly off."

Here the little manservant came in, and handed a letter to Félix Phellion. It was from old Picot, written at his dictation by Madame Lambert, and for that reason we do not produce its orthography. The woman's writing was of that kind which, once seen, one never forgets. Recognizing it at once—"It is a letter from the professor," said Félix, adding, before opening it, "You will excuse me, Monsieur Minard?"

"It will be a fine scolding," was the answer. "I never in my life saw anything so funny as his anger last night."

Félix smiled as he read the epistle, and when he had finished it, handed it to his father, saying—"You may read it aloud."

This the great citizen did in the most solemn tones:

"My dear Félix—I have just received your note, and it arrived very opportunely, for I was considerably displeased with you. A man of my age, and one who has solved the great problem of Perpetual Motion, does not spend his time on such trifles as stars. That may be good enough for greenhorns and beginners like yourself, which is what I went to tell the Minister of Public Instruction this morning, who, by the way, received me with the greatest courtesy. I put it to him whether, having sent them to the wrong address, he would not take back his Cross and his pension, although I had certainly deserved them in other ways.

"'The government,' answered the Minister, 'is not likely to make mistakes; what it does is always well done, and a decree signed by his Majesty's hand cannot be an-

nulled. Labors of yours have earned you both the favors that the King is bestowing, and it is really an old debt which I am so happy as to liquidate in his name.'

"'But what about Félix?' I asked. 'For, after all, you know that that discovery is very creditable to such a young man.'

"'Monsieur Félix Phellion,' was the Minister's reply, 'will be notified of his elevation to the Legion of Honor during the day; I shall have the royal ordinance signed this morning. Moreover, there is a seat vacant in the Academy of Science just now, and unless you have pretensions to it yourself—'

"I told the Minister that I would have none of his academy, which is like a shop with a large sign outside and nothing to sell, upon which he assured me that your chances were excellent.

"This, my poor boy, is all I have been able to do to pay you back for your good intentions, and to show that I have no ill feeling toward you.

"Your old master and friend,

"PICOT,

"Knight of the Legion of Honor.

"P.S.—I wish you could get a little bottle of that fine old brandy for me from your respected mother. You gave me some once before. I have not a drop left, and I drank some last night fit to wash horses' feet with, though I did not disdain the fair Hebe who served it."

"Certainly he shall have some more," said Madame Phellion, "and not only a bottle, but a whole gallon."

"And I," joined in Minard, so as not to be behindhand, "will send him a few bottles too, but do not tell him where

they are from; one can never tell how that extraordinary man will take a thing."

"Wife," suddenly said Phellion, "my black coat and a white tie!"

"Where are you going to?" she asked. "To the Minister to thank him?"

"Bring those things, as I tell you. I have an important call to make, and his worship the mayor will be kind enough to excuse me."

"I must go too," rejoined the other, "as I must attend to a matter relating to my son, who, I may say, has not discovered a star."

Vainly questioned by his wife and son, Phellion finished dressing, put on a pair of white gloves, sent for a carriage, and in a quarter of an hour was at Brigitte's door. He found her presiding over the cleaning of the silver plate and china used the day before. Suspending this domestic performance in honor of her visitor—"Well, Papa Phellion," said the old maid, when he was seated, "you left us in the lurch yesterday, which proved that you were cleverer than the rest. Do you know what trick the notary played us?"

"I know all about it, and the reprieve in the execution of your plan arising from that unforeseen occurrence is the theme of a momentous discussion I desire to have with you. Providence sometimes seems to take pleasure in counter-checking our pet combinations, and sometimes, by the means of placing obstacles in our way, seems to warn us that we are on the wrong path, and bids us pause."

"Providence," said the strong-minded Brigitte, "has something better to do than to be thinking of us."

"That is a matter of opinion, but I am accustomed to

recognize its hand in little things as well as in great, and assuredly, if it had yesterday allowed the redemption of your pledges to Monsieur de la Peyrade to begin, you would not have seen me here now."

"Then, you imagine that for want of a notary, the marriage cannot take place? The saying goes, you know, that the abbey does not stand idle for want of a monk."

"Mademoiselle," resumed the great citizen, "you will do me the justice to admit that neither I nor my wife has ever tried to influence your decisions. We allowed the young people to fall in love with each other, without considering particularly what their attachment might lead to—"

"To stuffing their heads with nonsense," interrupted the old maid; "that is what love leads to, and that is why I have always done without it."

"But what you say," continued Phellion, "is especially true about my poor son, for, despite the lofty occupations with which he has tried to displace his sorrow, he is so thoroughly overcome by it that this morning, in the face of his recent triumph, he spoke to me about a journey round the world, which would keep him absent for at least three years, even if he should escape the perils of such a long expedition."

"So much the better," answered Brigitte. "It seems to me not a bad idea; he will come back quite recovered, and with three or four more stars."

"One is enough for us," said Phellion, with redoubled solemnity, "and I am taking advantage of his discovery, which has lifted his name to such a high place in the world of science, to venture to say to you pointblank: I am here, Mademoiselle, to ask on behalf of my son Félix Phellion,

who loves and is beloved, for the hand of Mademoiselle Céleste Colleville."

"But, my dear man, it is too late. You know that we are positively pledged to la Peyrade."

"It is never too late for well doing, as the saying goes, and yesterday it would have been too soon for me to speak. My son could not then have said, in offer of compensation for the difference in the fortunes: 'Although Céleste has, through your generosity, a marriage portion which far exceeds mine, I have the honor to be a member of the Royal Order of the Legion of Honor, and shall, in all probability, shortly be a member of the Royal Academy of Science, one of the five branches of the Institute of France.' "

"No doubt," said Brigitte, "this makes Félix a very pretty match, but we have promised Céleste to la Peyrade. Their names are already posted at the municipal office, and under ordinary circumstances the contract would have been signed. He is working for Thuillier's election, which he has already got well under way, and we have money invested in a newspaper in which he is concerned. So, you see, we could not break our faith with him, even if we wanted to."

"Mademoiselle, I feel in no way humiliated by the fruitless effort I have just made. I do not even ask you to keep it secret, for I shall be the first to mention it to all our friends and acquaintances."

"Mention it to anybody you like, my good man," replied Brigitte in a sour tone. "Do you think because your son has discovered a star—if he really did discover it, and not the old man who was rewarded by the government—do you think that is any reason why he ought to marry a daughter of the King of France?"

Phellion rose.

"Let that suffice. I might answer you, with due deference to the Thuilliers, that to quote the Orléans as an illustration seems to me a slight exaggeration. But I am not in favor of acerbity in conversation, and will therefore withdraw, begging you to accept the assurance of my humble respects."

This day, which had begun so badly for Brigitte, was undoubtedly one of the busiest and stormiest of the present tale. To give an exact record of it, we must begin at six o'clock in the morning, when we see Madame Thuillier going to the Madeleine Church, to hear the Abbé Gondrin's Mass, and then to draw near to the Holy Table, where pious souls never fail to find refreshment and sustenance when bent on some great enterprise.

At eight, we see Minard the father arriving at the young priest's, in accordance with permission received the day before. He came to pour his paternal griefs into the bosom of the able and conciliatory casuist. The Abbé Gondrin gently reproved him for giving his son a profession which, while conferring a title that points to a strenuous life, is a cloak for idleness and all manner of folly. Barristers without briefs and physicians without patients are, when impecunious, the nursery of political disturbances and revolt; when, on the other hand, they are rich, they imitate the young men of the aristocracy, who of all the ancient privileges have kept none but the *dolce far niente*, and who devote almost the entire leisure of an empty, purposeless career to the cultivation of horse-racing and actresses. The Abbé was of opinion that Minard senior should try to remedy matters at a sacrifice to himself: in allotting a dowry to the siren, and marrying her off, morality would be doubly

vindicated. However, the young priest evinced no inclination to take any personal steps: he was too young for a diplomatic negotiation of this kind, where scandal might so easily slip in by the side of kindness. As the girl had a mother, Minard could make the necessary arrangements himself.

About noon, Madame Thuillier and Céleste came to see the clergyman. The poor child wanted to hear the sequel to the words in which the eloquent young priest had foreshadowed Félix's salvation at Brigitte's house the night before. It seemed strange to the fair little theologian that, without being given to religious practices, one could possibly find grace before Heaven, since the anathema was so plain: "Outside of the Church there is no salvation."

"My dear child," the Abbé consoled her, "you must understand those words more perfectly which seem so inexorable. They are rather words of comfort to those who have the felicity of living in the lap of our Holy Mother Church than a curse directed against those who are so unfortunate as to be outside her pale. God sees into the bottom of all hearts, and knows His elect, and so great are the treasures of His goodness that no one can fathom its wealth and munificence. Who should dare to say to God, to the Infinite One, 'Thou shalt be great and forgiving to this extent or that.' Our Saviour forgave the erring Magdalene, and on the Tree of Torture promised life eternal to the penitent thief, thus showing that His will shall prevail, not according to human judgment, but as He ordains in His infinite wisdom and mercy."

"Oh!" cried Céleste, "and to think this knowledge has come to me so late! I had the choice between Monsieur Félix Phellion and Monsieur la Peyrade, and I was afraid

to follow the voice of my heart! Oh, Monsieur l'Abbé, could you not talk to my mother? You are so respected by every one!"

"That is impossible, my child. If I were Madame Colleville's spiritual adviser, I might make the attempt, but we are so often accused of ill-advised interference in family affairs. You may be sure that my unauthorized and unsolicited intervention would do more harm than good. You yourself, and those who love you," he added, glancing at Madame Thuillier, "must see whether the arrangements, though rather far advanced, cannot somehow be modified in the direction of your wishes."

As the priest was finishing his sentence, his old housekeeper came in, to see if he would receive Monsieur Félix Phellion.

"Go out this way," said the Abbé hurriedly, leading his two parishioners to the entrance of a private corridor.

"Monsieur l'Abbé," said Félix to the young priest, as soon as they were face to face, "I have heard of the kind manner in which you spoke of me yesterday in Monsieur Thuillier's house, and I should have hastened to express my gratitude, even if another matter had not brought me here."

The Abbé Gondrin waived the usual formalities of introduction, in order to find out how he could be useful.

"With intentions I believe to have been charitable," answered the young professor, "some one talked to you yesterday about the state of my soul. Those who testify such familiarity with it are better acquainted with my inner self than I am, as for some days past my spirit has been strangely and powerfully stirred. I have never doubted the existence of God, but, on the contrary, from communing

with the infinitude where my mind was searching one of His creations, I seem to have gained a less vague and a closer knowledge of Him, and I am now asking myself whether an upright and honest life is the only worship I ought to lay at His feet. Nevertheless, very many objections occur to me with regard to the religion whose minister you are, and while being sensible to the beauty of its exterior forms, my reason warns me against many of its rules and doctrines. I am perhaps paying very dearly for my indifference to the right solution of my doubts; possibly it may cost me my life's happiness. But I am determined to get to the bottom of them. Nobody is better able than you, Monsieur l'Abbé, to help me. I will therefore ask you to advise and enlighten me, to answer my questions, and to tell me what books to read. The soul that appeals to you is sorely afflicted. Is that not a fitting preparation for receiving the good seed of your exhortations?''

The Abbé stated what a pleasure it would be to him, notwithstanding his own modest qualifications, to set the young professor's scruples at rest, and after asking him for his friendship, enjoined upon him the reading of Pascal's ''Thoughts,'' the most helpful of all books. A natural affinity would declare itself between Félix and that great author, because of their common interest in geometry.

While this scene was in progress, Brigitte, mounted on a chair, with feather-brush in hand, was dusting a shelf in the cupboard where she was arraying her library of plates, dishes, and jugs, when she was accosted by Flavie—''Brigitte, as soon as you have finished, you will do well to call on us, or else you must let me send Céleste to you. I think she is inclined to try some of her nonsense on us.''

"How so?" asked Brigitte, without pausing in her dusting.

"I believe that she and Madame Thuillier went to see the Abbé Gondrin this morning, and here she comes back and tells me a lot of stuff about Félix Phellion—talks of him as though he were a god. You understand that to refuse la Peyrade is only one step further on."

"I never did want that meddling priest invited; it was you who insisted he should be."

"But," urged Flavie, "it was the proper thing to do."

"I don't care a fig for the proprieties. He is a phrase-monger, and says nothing but what is out of place. Send Céleste to me, I will attend to her—"

Brigitte was interrupted by the visit of the head clerk of the new notary who—Dupuis having defaulted—was to draw up the marriage contract. Regardless of her untidy appearance, the old maid ordered the clerk to be called in, but made him the concession of descending from her perch.

"Monsieur Thuillier," said the clerk, "was at our office this morning to speak to my chief about the particulars of the contract he was intrusting us with. But before putting down the terms in writing, it is our custom to get a verbal declaration from the prospective donors of the marriage portion. Thus, Monsieur Thuillier told us that he would settle the reversion of the house he was living in—which is this one, I presume—on the bride."

"Yes," said Brigitte, "that is right. I am giving her an outright annuity of three thousand francs a year, derived from three per cent government bonds."

"I see, here it is," confirmed the clerk by his notebook: "Mademoiselle Brigitte Thuillier, three thousand francs a year. Now, there is Madame Céleste Thuillier, wife of

Louis-Jérome Thuillier, who gives six thousand francs a year in the same way, and settles a further six thousand in reversion."

"That is as good as if the notary had passed it, but since it is your way of doing things, you can, if you so desire, be taken to my sister-in-law."

The lawyer's clerk was shown into Madame Thuillier's room at Brigitte's behest, but he speedily returned, saying there must be some misunderstanding, for the lady was not willing to make any settlement at all.

"This is too much of a good thing!" said Mademoiselle Thuillier. "Come with me, sir."

And she burst like a whirlwind into the other woman's room, whom she found all pale and trembling.

"What is this you have been saying to Monsieur about settling nothing on Céleste?"

"Quite right," was the rebellious answer, delivered in a quavering voice. "I intend to give nothing."

"Then your intentions," said Brigitte, red with wrath, "have changed entirely?"

"I have stated my intentions," was the rebel's only reply.

"You will at least give your reason?"

"The marriage does not suit me."

"Indeed! And since when?"

"It is needless for this gentleman to listen to our discussion, as it will not figure in the contract," observed Madame Thuillier.

"No wonder you are ashamed," said Brigitte, "for you are not showing in a very favorable light.—Monsieur," turning to the clerk, "is it not easier to make erasures in the contract than to add to it?"

The clerk bowed in assent.

"Leave the document as it stands. If Madame remains of the same opinion, there will be time enough to cancel a few clauses."

He saluted the ladies and went away.

When the sisters-in-law were left together, Brigitte began—"Come now, have you lost your head? What is this whim that has come over you?"

"It is not a whim, it is a very firm determination."

"Which you have been buying from your dear Abbé Gondrin. You do not dare to tell me that you have not just come from there with Céleste!"

"It is quite true that Céleste and I saw our spiritual adviser this morning, but I did not say a word to him on the subject."

"Indeed! So it is in your empty little head that this firecracker was manufactured?"

"Yes; for, as I told you yesterday, I think Céleste might make a more suitable match, and I have no idea of impoverishing myself in favor of a marriage I do not approve."

"Which you do not approve? Ah, then your ladyship's opinion is to be asked!"

"I know very well," said Madame Thuillier, "that I have never counted for anything in this house. I have been reconciled to that for some time, but when the happiness is threatened of a child that I look upon as my own—"

"A child!" exclaimed Brigitte. "You were too stupid to have one yourself!"

"Sister," said Madame Thuillier, with grave dignity, "I took the Sacrament this morning, and there are things that I must not hear to-day."

"The good-for-nothing! The idle hussy! Cannot even

pick up her handkerchief, and wants to be the mistress in the house!"

"I have so little desire to be mistress here that last night I allowed myself to be silenced, after merely trying to say a few words; but I am mistress of my own property, and as I think that one day Céleste will be a very unhappy woman, I shall keep it, so as to have it at my disposal at the proper time and occasion."

"How kind of you!" sneered the other. "Your own property!"

"Certainly. The property I inherited from my father and mother, and which I brought Monsieur Thuillier in marriage."

"And who put that money to use? Who made it produce twelve thousand francs a year?"

"I have never asked you to account for any of it," quietly replied Madame Thuillier. "Had it all been lost in the investments you chose to make, I should not have uttered a word of complaint; but they were profitable, and therefore it is only right that I should reap the benefits. In any case, I am not doing this for my own good."

"Very likely, because, at the rate you are going, it is by no means certain that we shall be under the same roof much longer."

"Do you think Monsieur Thuillier would send me away? That could not be done without good reason, and, thank God, as a wife he has never been able to find fault with me."

"Viper, hypocrite, heartless creature!" shrieked Brigitte, her arguments being exhausted.

"Sister, you are in my room," was Madame Thuillier's gentle reproof.

"Get out of it then, you miserable doll!" howled the

infuriated woman, in a paroxysm of rage. "It is all I can do to keep myself from—"

And she made a gesture which was at once an insult and a threat. Madame Thuillier rose to go.

"No, you shall not go!" cried Brigitte, forcing her into a chair. "Until Thuillier has heard about this, you shall remain locked up in here!"

When Brigitte, with a flaming face, reappeared in the room where she had left Madame Colleville, she found her brother there, who was radiant with delight.

"My dear," said he to the shrew, whose agitation he did not notice, "everything is going beautifully. The conspiracy of silence has stopped. The 'National' and the 'Carlist Journal' reprint one of our articles, and there is a little attack in one of the ministerial sheets."

"That may be, but everything is not going beautifully here," answered Brigitte; "and, in fact, if it continues I shall leave the shop!"

"Who has been offending you?" asked her brother.

"That insolent wife of yours, who has just made a great scene! I am all shaken up still."

"My wife make a scene? Then it is the first time in her life."

"There is a first time for everything, and if you do not see about this—"

"But what was the scene about?"

"Her ladyship does not want la Peyrade for her god-daughter, and, from spite at not being able to prevent the marriage, says she will make no settlement."

"Come, be calm," said Thuillier, quite composedly. "I will go and smooth the whole affair out."

"You, Flavie," said Brigitte, while Thuillier was with

his wife, "will be kind enough to go down and speak to Mademoiselle Céleste. I did not wish to see her myself just now, for if she contradicted me I should be capable of boxing her ears. You can tell her that I do not like conspiracies, that she was left a free choice between Monsieur la Peyrade and Monsieur Phellion, that she refused the latter, and that everything was arranged on that basis, and if she does not want to see herself reduced to the dowry you can give her, which a bank messenger could easily carry in his waistcoat pocket—"

"Really, my dear Brigitte," interrupted Flavie, bristling up under this impertinent language, "you need not have reminded us of our poverty in this way. After all, we have never asked you for anything; we always pay our rent punctually; and, to say no more, Monsieur Félix Phellion would gladly take Céleste with as much as a bank messenger could carry in his pocket."

"Oh, then you are in the plot too! Go and get your Félix then!" screamed Brigitte. "I know very well, my good woman, that this marriage was never much to your taste! It is so unpleasant to be no more than a mother-in-law to one's daughter's husband!"

Flavie had recovered her temper, which for a moment was failing her, and, without answering the innuendo, restricted herself to a shrug of the shoulders.

Thuillier now came back, but without his former happy expression.

"My dear girl," he said to his sister, "you have a very good heart, of course, but, on the other hand, you sometimes are very violent!"

"Oh," the old maid flared up, "you are going to take me to task, too, are you?"

"I have nothing to reproach you with seriously, and I have been giving my wife a good dressing down; still, one must keep within the bounds of politeness."

"What is this rubbish about politeness? Have I been deficient in politeness?"

"Well, my dear, you raised your hand against your sister."

"What? Do you mean to say that I raised my hand against that silly idiot? Really, that's a good one!"

"And besides," continued Thuillier, "one does not put people of her age in prison."

"Did I put your wife in prison?"

"You can hardly deny it, when I found the door of her room double-locked."

"No wonder, if I turned the key accidentally in my anger at the infamous abuse she showered on me!"

"Come, come," said Thuillier, "this sort of behavior will not do for people in our class."

"Oh, then I am in the wrong, am I? Very well, my dear boy, you shall remember this day, and you shall see how your house gets on after I have washed my hands of it."

"You will always wash your hands in it, you mean," answered her brother. "Housekeeping is your very life, and you would be the first to regret it."

"We shall see about that! After twenty years of hard work, to think of being treated like dirt!" And the old maid flung out of the room, slamming the door behind her.

Almost at the same time the outer door-bell rang.

"La Peyrade, most probably," said Thuillier with a smile.

It was in effect the Provençal, to whom the last speaker

said—"I am glad to see you, old fellow, for the house is in an uproar on your account. There is a revolution going on here, and you must try to restore peace and quiet with your gilded tongue."

He then related to the barrister all the circumstances of the civil war which had just broken out. Théodose addressed himself to Madame Colleville—"At this stage, I think I can without impropriety ask for an interview of a few minutes with Mademoiselle Céleste." Here again the Provençal showed his usual subtlety. He understood perfectly that in the mission of pacification devolving upon him, Céleste Colleville was the key of the situation.

"I will send for her," said Flavie, "and you shall be left alone with her."

As soon as the two young people were in private, la Peyrade began—"Mademoiselle, I think I am neither indiscreet nor impatient in begging you to tell me what decision you have come to."

"Well, Monsieur," answered Céleste, "since you ask me so frankly, I must tell you what you already know, which is, that having been brought up with Monsieur Félix Phellion, and having known him much longer than I have known you, the idea of marrying — always very alarming to a young girl—is less terrifying with him than with any one else."

"There was a time when you had a choice, and when you were hesitating."

"Very true, but just then there was a difference of opinion between us about religion."

"And does that obstacle no longer exist?"

"It has almost vanished. I am in the habit of giving way to people better informed and more enlightened than I

am, and you yourself, Monsieur, heard how the Abbé Gondrin spoke yesterday."

"God forbid," replied la Peyrade, "that I should be so bold as to question the judgment of so distinguished a man! Taking it for granted, however, that Monsieur Phellion might fully satisfy you eventually on the point of religion, have you thought of the great change that has come into his life? I have some fear that the modesty and humility that were among the principal charms of his character may give way to the self-consciousness and self-assurance which develop into selfishness, and at last dry up the spring of generous sentiment. And then, Mademoiselle, you can scarcely but acknowledge that he who has discovered one world wants to discover another. Do you wish to challenge the whole heavenly firmament in rivalry?"

"You are pleading your case very cleverly," smiled Céleste, "and, as a barrister, I think you would be quite as troublesome a husband as Monsieur Phellion the astronomer."

"Mademoiselle," resumed the Provençal, "to speak seriously, I think your heart is in the right place, and you are capable of very fine feeling. Well, then, do you know what has happened to Monsieur Phellion? He has lost nothing by his devotion to his old master; his pious deception is now generally known; he is to receive due credit for his discovery, and if I can believe Monsieur Minard, whom I met a moment ago, the young man is to be made a knight of the Legion of Honor at once, and a member of the Academy of Science very soon. If I were a woman, I should certainly be displeased, if, at the very instant when I wanted to bestow my favor upon a man, such an avalanche of good fortune came down upon him. I

should be afraid of being accused of worshipping the rising sun."

"Oh!" she ejaculated, "you do not suspect me of anything so base!"

"I? By no means. I was asserting just the contrary, if you remember; but the world is so hasty and so unjust, and at the same time so sweeping in its conclusions!"

Observing that he had aroused some apprehension in the girl, who remained silent, he continued—"But to come to a much more serious phase of your situation, and which is not a purely personal matter, do you know that at this very time, and in this very house, you are the unconscious cause of the most distressing and regrettable occurrences?"

"I, Monsieur?" exclaimed Céleste, with mingled surprise and horror.

"Yes, you have turned your godmother, through her extreme affection for you, into a different woman. For the first time in her life she is thinking for herself, and has declared that she will contribute nothing whatever to your dowry."

"But I beseech you to believe that this idea of my godmother's is quite new to me."

"I am aware of that, and it would be of no great consequence if Mademoiselle Brigitte had not taken her sister-in-law's view as an insult, having always found her so amenable to suggestion. The most violent scenes have taken place. Between the hammer and the anvil, Thuillier was powerless to do anything. In fact, without intending to do so, he aggravated things, and they are now at such a pitch, that if you chose to brave Mademoiselle Thuillier's dreadful anger, and went to her room, you would see her packing up her trunks. She is going to leave the house."

"Monsieur, what are you saying?" cried Céleste in dismay.

"The exact truth, which can easily be verified by any of the servants. I acknowledge that such a state of affairs hardly seems credible."

"But it is impossible!" cried the poor child, whose perturbation increased with every word from the wily Provençal. "How can I be the cause of such a terrible misfortune?"

"That is to say that you do not want to be, for the mischief is done, and Heaven grant that it may not be irretrievable."

"But, my God! What am I to do?" said Céleste, wringing her hands.

"Sacrifice yourself, I should answer at once, if it were not that in the present circumstances the part of the victim, at once enviable and painful, were not allotted to myself."

"Monsieur de la Peyrade," said Céleste, "you interpret the resistance which I have offered, and which I have expressed very wrongly. I may have a preference, but I never thought of myself as a victim. Whenever it is necessary to secure peace in this house, and allay the trouble I have stirred up, by stifling that preference, I shall do so without repugnance, and even cheerfully. My godmother is a second mother to me, and for a mother what would one not do?"

The case was so pathetic, and Céleste made such a charmingly innocent display of the depth of her feelings and of her readiness to be sacrificed, that la Peyrade, if he had had any heart, would have been disgusted with himself. But Céleste was only a stepping-stone to him, and, provided that a ladder is carrying your weight, and taking you higher

up, why stop to consider whether it is an enthusiastic ladder? They therefore agreed that Céleste should go to her godmother, and should persuade her that she was in error in supposing la Peyrade ever to have been the object of the girl's aversion. Madame Thuillier's opposition being overcome, the rest would be easy. The barrister undertook to establish concord between the two sisters-in-law; and, as may readily be imagined, he found the right language to show the simple child a future in which, by the force of love and devotion, he would compensate her for all the moral anguish she was now suffering.

And his expectation was realized. A few kind words and embraces—poor Céleste paying the indemnity of the war—ended the quarrel.

During the evening Minard was announced.

"My dear friends," said he, as he came in, "I have come to make a little disclosure to you, which will probably occasion you some surprise, and it will be a lesson to us all when next we think of admitting strangers to our house."

"How so?" asked Brigitte, inquisitively.

"That Hungarian you were so much in love with, that Countess—Madame Torna de Godollo—"

"Well?"

"Well, she was a swindler, and for two months you were pampering the most impudent of courtesans."

"Who told you such nonsense?" asked Brigitte, unwilling to admit that she had been duped.

"It is no nonsense at all," answered the mayor. "I satisfied myself by ocular demonstration. I have seen Madame de Godollo, whose real name is Madame Kormorn, and who is no more a Countess than you or Madame Colle-

ville, in the society of the creature on whom my son spends his money and time. Do you insist on further details?"

"Yes," said Brigitte, still incredulous, "an explanation is always welcome."

"The day of your dinner," said Minard, "while you were waiting for me, I went to the Folies-Dramatiques, the snare of my son Julien, where this woman was to make her first appearance. I wanted to make sure whether the young rascal, who, pretending to be ill, left the house directly after our departure, was at the theatre. I did not see him among the audience, but as the curtain went up, I saw my boy, the shame of my old age, talking in the most familiar manner possible with a fireman in the wings, and so completely exposed to view from the front that some vulgar person in the pit called out: 'Get back into your kennel, puppy!' Fancy the joy of my paternal heart at hearing this pleasing admonition. I went to this dangerous young woman's mother, and told her to put a stop to a connection which no doubt grieved her as much as it did me. I said I was prepared to make a sacrifice, that I would pay fifteen hundred francs yearly, or a lump sum of thirty thousand francs, in the shape of a dowry for her daughter, adding that she might as well give up my son, as I intended to cut off all supplies. 'You don't say so?' replied the mother. 'Why, it so happens that a copying clerk in the court of the twelfth district once had an eye on Olympe, and just now is at her again. The only thing I am afraid of is the bad advice of a Pole called Madame Kormorn. My daughter is quite foolish about her, and allows her to manage her; but perhaps if you could talk to her, and could let her see how much money there was in it, she might play into our hands. She was here just now, and if you like I will call her, and tell

her, without mentioning your name, that a gentleman wants to see her.' Judge of my surprise when I found myself confronting your Madame de Godollo, who, as soon as she had set eyes upon me, ran away, laughing like mad!"

"Are you quite sure that it was she?" inquired Brigitte, "if you only caught a glimpse of her—"

The sly Provençal was not the man to miss his opportunity.

"His worship the mayor is not mistaken," he declared authoritatively.

"So you know her too, do you?" said Mademoiselle Thuillier. "And you allowed us to rub elbows with such baggage!"

"Quite the contrary," answered la Peyrade, "I got rid of her for you without saying anything, and without creating scandal. You remember how suddenly she vanished. It was I who, after finding out what she was, gave her two days' notice to clear the premises, threatening, in case she should decline, to inform you of the truth."

"My dear friend," said Thuillier, warmly shaking the barrister's hand, "you acted with wisdom and energy. We owe you another obligation."

About half-past one the next day, la Peyrade, Thuillier, Colleville, Madame Thuillier, and Céleste were met in the drawing-room, in readiness for the signing of the marriage settlements. They were commenting upon the lateness of Flavie and Brigitte, who were still due, when the porter came in, and handed Thuillier a sealed package, which had just been given him, addressed—"Monsieur Thuillier, Director of the 'Echo de la Bièvre.' Immediate."

He opened the envelope at once, and took out a number of a ministerial organ, which had shown its want of courtesy

and its hostility to the new management by refusing the "exchange" which periodical sheets are usually well enough pleased to make, sending paper for paper. Puzzled at this missive being delivered at his house, instead of at the office of the "Echo," and that with palpably studied premeditation, Thuillier hastily unfolded the issue received, and with conceivable agitation read the following article, to which his attention was drawn by a surrounding border of red ink:

"An obscure newspaper was about to die a natural death, when an attempt to galvanize it was made by an individual of new-fledged ambitions. His design is to use it as a footstool for the purpose of climbing from a municipal post to the envied deputy's chair. Happily, this transparent scheme is condemned to failure. The electors will not allow themselves to be caught in the meshes of this windy sheet, and at the proper time, if ridicule should not have settled the claims of this absurd candidate, we shall demonstrate to our aspirant for parliamentary honors that it is not sufficient to buy a second-hand newspaper, and engage a hack to turn the horrible jargon of his articles and pamphlets into French. For to-day, we content ourselves with this little hint, but our readers may rest assured that we shall keep them informed as to all the developments of this electoral farce, if, indeed, its instigator has the misplaced courage to continue it."

Thuillier read this declaration of war over twice, with anything but an impassive countenance, after which, taking la Peyrade aside, he said to him—"Here, this is a serious affair."

The Provençal read the article, and merely observed, "Well?"

"What do you mean by 'well'?" asked the would-be deputy.

"I mean I want to know what there is so serious about this."

"Serious? Why, the article is most plainly calculated to do me the greatest injury."

"Do you suspect some virtuous Cérizet is throwing a stick between your legs, from motives of revenge?"

"Whether it is Cérizet, or any one else who wrote this diatribe, whoever did it is an impudent scoundrel," said Thuillier excitedly, "and I shall follow the thing up!"

"I," answered the other, "should take no notice of it. You are neither named nor described, though it is obvious enough that it is you who are being attacked. We must let our enemy compromise himself a little further, and at the right moment we will rap him over the knuckles."

"Not at all!" exclaimed Thuillier. "I cannot possibly remain under the stigma of such an insult!"

"The deuce! How thin-skinned you are! You ought to remember, my dear boy, that you are a politician and a journalist; you ought to be more hardened."

"It is my principle not to allow people to walk on my toes. Besides, the author of the article announces his intention of repeating the offence. His impertinence must be stopped at once. I shall appeal to the law—"

"Which will be of no avail. You have no case. Neither your name nor the paper's name has been mentioned. But we will talk it over again, for here comes your sister, and she would think all was lost if we let her know of this little impediment."

As Brigitte and Flavie came in, Colleville exclaimed, "Full up!" imitating the Parisian omnibus conductor's war-cry.

"Heavens! Colleville, how vulgar you are!" said the late-comer, speedily casting a stone into her neighbor's garden, lest one should be cast into hers. "Are we all ready?" she added, buttoning her cape before the glass. "What time is it? We do not want to arrive too early, like provincials."

"It is ten minutes to two," answered Colleville. "My watch goes like the Tuileries clock."

"We can start, then," said Brigitte. "It will take us just that long to get to the Rue Caumartin. Joséphine," she called out from the drawing-room door, "we dine at six, so govern yourself accordingly, and put the turkey on the spit at the right time. Try not to burn it, as you did the other day.—But what is this?" shutting the door abruptly, which she had been holding ajar. "Some tiresome caller, I suppose. I hope Henri will have the sense to say we are all out."

Nothing of the sort happened, however, since Henri came to say that an old gentleman with a rosette in his buttonhole, and very aristocratic, asked to be admitted on urgent business.

"Why didn't you tell him no one was at home?"

"I should have, if Mademoiselle had not opened the drawing-room door so that Monsieur could see the whole family together."

"Of course. You are always right," snapped the old maid.

"What answer am I to give?" asked the servant.

"You may tell the gentleman," said Thuillier, "that I am exceedingly sorry not to be able to see him, as I am being awaited at the notary's to sign a marriage contract, and that if he will come back in about two hours' time—"

"I have told him all that already," replied Henri, "and he said that the contract was just what he had come to see you about, and that his visit concerned you more than it did himself."

"Well, see him, and pack him off in double-quick time," said Brigitte. "That will be a shorter way than all this rigmarole with Henri, who is such a great orator."

Had la Peyrade been consulted, he might perhaps not have come to the same conclusion, for he had already had more than one specimen of the occult influence working against his marriage, and the present visit roused evil forebodings in him.

"Show him into my study," said Thuillier, taking his sister's advice; and, opening a door between the drawing-room and the room in which he was to receive the importunate caller, he preceded him thither.

Immediately, Brigitte adjusted her eye to the keyhole.

"There is my dear old idiot of a brother asking the man to sit down, and at the back of the study, too; we shall not be able to hear a word of the conversation."

La Peyrade meanwhile walked up and down the room, his disturbed state of mind concealed under a cloak of supreme indifference. He even went up to the three women standing in a group, and paid Céleste a few compliments, which she met with the happy smile that lay in the spirit of her part. As for Colleville, he was killing time by concocting an anagram on the name "Echo de la Bièvre."

"What a lot of snuff he takes!" said Brigitte, her eye still at the keyhole. "His gold snuff-box beats Minard's all to pieces. I never saw such a large one! Oh, I daresay it is only gilt," she added, by way of reflection. "But he is doing all the talking, and Thuillier is sitting there as

dumb as an oyster. So much the worse for them both. I am going straight in, to tell them that this is no way to keep ladies waiting."

Her hand already on the door-knob, she heard Thuillier's companion speaking quite loudly, which made her peer in again.

"He is getting up at last," she remarked, greatly pleased.

But seeing, a moment later, that she had been mistaken, and that the old man had only left his chair for the purpose of continuing the conversation while pacing the room, she reverted to her former intention. She gave two imperious, sharp raps at the door, and then stalked resolutely into her brother's study.

La Peyrade now also displayed the bad taste—excusable only through intense interest and curiosity—of taking a look at the proceedings through the keyhole. At first, he thought he recognized the little old man, whom, under the name of Commandeur, he had once seen at Madame de Godollo's. He then observed that Thuillier was addressing his sister with an impatience and an authoritative manner which in no wise coincided with his usual habits of deference and submission.

"It appears," said Brigitte, returning to the drawing-room, "that Thuillier is being very much entertained by that creature, for he ordered me quite abruptly to leave them alone, although the little man said very politely that they would soon be finished. Jérome impressed upon me that we were to be sure to wait for him. Since starting that newspaper, he has become unbearable; he behaves as though he could move the whole world with his little finger."

"I am very much afraid that he is being caught by some

adventurer," said la Peyrade. "I could almost swear to having seen that little old man at Madame Kormorn's. He must be one of the gang."

"Then you ought to have told me," Brigitte reproached him. "I would have asked him for news of the Countess, so as to show him that we knew all about his Hungarian."

Just then a movement of chairs was heard and Brigitte ran back to the door.

"Yes," whispered she, "he is going; Jérome is bowing him out of the room."

As Thuillier was some little time coming back, Colleville had an opportunity to look out of the window, and seeing the old gentleman get into his handsome brougham, exclaimed—"Scissors! what a gorgeous livery! He is a high-class villain, anyhow!"

Thuillier at length came in. His face was anxious, and he spoke very gravely—"My dear la Peyrade, you never told us that there was another matrimonial affair occupying your mind."

"Yes, I told you that a very rich heiress had been proposed to me, but that my heart was here; that I did not intend to pursue the other match, to which, as you must therefore see, I gave very little consideration."

"Well, now, I think you were wrong to take that offer so lightly."

"What, is it you who, in the presence of these ladies, find fault with my fidelity to my first affections and to our long-standing pledges?"

"My friend, the conversation I have just had was a most instructive one to me, and when you know all that I know, and other details besides, which concern you alone, and which will be confided to you, I think you will concur with

my view. In any case, we do not go to the notary's to-day, that is certain, and as for you, your wisest course is to betake yourself to Monsieur du Portail's at once."

"That name again! It haunts me like remorse!" cried la Peyrade.

"Yes, go at once; he is expecting you, and it is an indispensable preliminary to any further steps. After seeing him, if you still persist in claiming Céleste's hand, we can continue our original plan, but before your interview with him nothing will be done."

"My dear brother," said Brigitte, "you have allowed yourself to be led by the nose by a sharper; the man is one of the Godollo lot."

"Madame de Godollo," replied Thuillier, "is not quite what you think she is, and the best thing for every one in this house is never to say another word about her, either good or bad. As for la Peyrade, since this is not the first time such an invitation has come to him, I really fail to comprehend why he hesitates going to see Monsieur du Portail."

"Good heavens!" ejaculated Brigitte, "has the little man bewitched you entirely?"

"I tell you that the little man is all he looks. He has seven medals, a magnificent carriage, and a pair of horses, and he told me a number of the most astonishing things."

After seeing himself almost pushed out of the door, la Peyrade took his hat with an ill grace, and started for the place to which his destiny called him. Arrived at the Rue Honoré-Chevalier, he was seized with a doubt. The dilapidated appearance of the house he was to enter made him fear that he had forgotten the number. It looked improbable to him that a personage of Monsieur du Portail's im-

portance should be so housed. It was therefore with some degree of diffidence that he made overtures to Sire Perrache, the porter. But once in the antechamber of the apartment he was directed to, the respectability of Bruno, the old butler, and the affluent style of the furniture and fittings, fully answered his preconceptions. Ushered into the study without delay, his astonishment was by no means small when he found himself face to face with the alleged Commandeur, Madame de Godollo's friend; the little old man, in fact, of whom he had caught a passing glimpse at the Thuilliers' not long before.

"At last," said du Portail, rising to draw up a chair, "you have come, Mister Obstinate! You have taken a deal of persuasion!"

"May I be favored, sir," said la Peyrade haughtily, without taking the proffered chair, "with some excuse for your interference in my private affairs? I do not know you, and may add that the place where I once saw you has inspired me with no especially keen desire to make your acquaintance."

"And where did you see me?"

"In the rooms of a notorious adventuress, who called herself Madame Torna, Countess de Godollo."

"Where consequently you, sir, were also in the habit of going, and from less disinterested motives than myself."

"I have not come here," said Théodose, "for the purpose of bandying words. I am entitled, sir, to an explanation of your conduct in general to me. I must, therefore, beg you not to wander from the point for the sake of making jokes, which I am not in the least disposed to enter into."

"Very well," said du Portail, "sit down. For I am not disposed to dislocate my neck by talking up to you."

The suggestion was not at all unreasonable, and was made in a tone to convince la Peyrade that the old gentleman would not prove at all susceptible to fine airs. So the barrister made up his mind to defer to his host's wish, though he took care to acquiesce with a reluctance verging upon impoliteness.

"Monsieur Cérizet," said Monsieur du Portail, "a man of good position in the world, and who has the honor of being one of your friends—"

"I see the man no longer," said la Peyrade sharply, fully perceiving the old man's malicious insinuation.

"At any rate, there was a time when you occasionally did see him—at the Rocher de Cancale, for instance. It was there that the good Monsieur Cérizet was commissioned to sound you upon a marriage—"

"Which I refused," interrupted Théodose, "and which I now refuse more emphatically than ever."

"Ah, yes, that is just the question," resumed the other. "I believe, nevertheless, that you will accept, and it is to talk about this matter with you that I have so long desired to meet you."

"But what about the lunatic you are throwing at my head? What is she to you? She is neither your daughter nor a relative, I presume, for if she were you would be more exacting in your hunt for a husband."

"The girl is a daughter of a friend of mine. She lost her father more than ten years ago, since which time I have taken care of her, and bestowed all the attention on her which her painful state demands. Her fortune, to which I have considerably added, will, in conjunction with my own, which she will inherit, make her a very desirable match. I know you are not opposed to handsome dowries, as you

look for them in the meanest places—in such houses as the Thuilliers', for example, or, to use your own expression, in that of adventuresses whom you scarcely know. I hence assumed you might not be averse to taking one from me, seeing that my girl's disease has been declared quite curable by the doctors, while you will never cure Monsieur and Mademoiselle Thuillier of being a fool and a shrew respectively, any more than you can cure Madame Kormorn of her middling virtue and flighty ways."

"It may suit me," answered la Peyrade, "to marry the goddaughter of a fool and a shrew, if I choose; or if I fall in love with a coquette, I may become her husband. But neither you, sir, understand! nor the cleverest, nor the mightiest, could make me marry the Queen of Sheba against my will."

"It is for that very reason I shall appeal to your intelligence and good sense. The first point to be noted is that Céleste Colleville is lost to you definitely. I have just left Thuillier, after frightening him by drawing a picture of all the misfortunes he had already suffered, and would still suffer, unless he relinquished the notion of uniting his godchild to you. He knows now that it was I who undermined the Countess de Bruel's friendly efforts on his behalf in the matter of the Cross; that I had his pamphlet seized; that I sent the Hungarian into his house, who tricked you all so cleverly; that at my instance the ministerial newspapers have begun an assault, which will grow more effective day by day, to say nothing of other machinery to be set working, if need be, with the end of ruining his election. So, you see, my dear sir, not only will you miss Thuillier's gratitude for being his successful political agent, but you are a stumbling-block to his ambition. I have said enough

to show you that your chances of getting into this family, who really never wanted you, have now utterly collapsed, and are reduced to nothing at all."

"But who are you, you who had an object in accomplishing all this?" demanded the barrister.

"I will not answer you at the present, because you shall soon know who I am. But let us, if you please, continue the analysis of your life, which has come to an end to-day, but which I propose to renew to fame and glory. You are twenty-eight, and have but begun a career in which I forbid your taking another step. A few days more, and the barristers' association will meet, and their board of discipline will censure your conduct more or less severely as to the property you so amiably put into Thuillier's hands. Do not give way to any illusion; for being censured is almost equal to expulsion from the bar."

"And it is to your kindness, no doubt," said la Peyrade, "that I am indebted for these charming results!"

"Which I am delighted with," rejoined du Portail; "for to tow you into port it was first necessary to cut away your rigging; otherwise you would have been sailing those middle class puddles forever."

Seeing that he was playing against such a strong opponent, the adroit Provençal thought it best to modify his tone, and remarked, more reservedly—"Monsieur will at least allow me to postpone my grateful acknowledgments until further developments shall show me—"

"Here you are," du Portail went on, "at twenty-eight, without a sou, without a profession, with ordinary antecedents, and acquaintances like Monsieur Dutocq and the *bold* Cérizet; you owe Mademoiselle Thuillier ten thousand francs, which you are conscientiously bound to pay back,

even if you had not pledged yourself to do so from vanity; to Madame Lambert you owe twenty-five thousand francs, which you naturally are in great haste to restore; finally, this marriage, your last hope, your harbor of safety, has just been closed to you. Between ourselves, if I have anything reasonable to propose to you, do you not think you ought to listen?"

"There will always be time enough for that, and I have every objection to assenting to your plans, however kind, without knowing what they are."

"I ordered the subject of the marriage broached to you," resumed du Portail. "This marriage is in my mind closely connected with another scheme of life for you, in which there enters the principle, as it were, of hereditary duty. Do you know what your uncle was doing in Paris when you came to search him out in 1829? He was supposed to be a millionnaire by your family, and, dying suddenly, before you could reach him, did not even leave enough money for his funeral. He was buried in a pauper's grave."

"Then you knew him?"

"He was my dearest and oldest friend."

"But at that rate," said la Peyrade eagerly, "the sum of one hundred louis, which came from an unknown hand during my early days in Paris—"

"Came from myself in fact," answered du Portail. "Unluckily becoming involved in a complication of business, which you will understand better later on, I was not able to continue in my friendliness toward you, evoked by the memory of your uncle. This explains why I left you to ripen, like a medlar on your garret straw, to the maturity of misery which forced you into the hands of Dutocq and Cérizet."

"I am none the less obliged to you, Monsieur," bowed la Peyrade; "and had I known who my generous, unknown patron was, you may believe that I would have lost no time in going to you and thanking you."

"A truce to compliments," said the other; "and, to come to the important part of this interview, what would you say if you were informed that this uncle, whose assistance and support you came to seek in Paris, was one of the agents of that occult power which is the theme of so many ridiculous fables and the subject of so much foolish prejudice?"

"I do not quite understand," said la Peyrade, with anxious curiosity. "Might I beg you to particularize?"

"Let us suppose, for instance," du Portail went on, "that your uncle were still alive, and said to you: 'My dear nephew, you are looking for fortune and power; you have the ambition to rise above the common crowd, to have a hand in all the great movements of your time; you want to find employment for your keen and active mind, which is full of resource and has a bent for intrigue; and you want to expend the powers of will and initiative which you have hitherto foolishly wasted upon the driest and toughest thing in the world, the middle class, in a much higher and handsomer sphere. Very well, bow your head, my dear nephew, and come with me through a little door I will open to you. It will take you into a large house, not of good repute, but which is better than its name. Once you have crossed the threshold, you will stand up to the full height of your genius, if there is a single spark of it in you. Statesmen, and even kings, will tell you their most sacred thoughts; you will be their hidden right hand, and none of the joys that money and great place can yield a man will be beyond your reach.' "

"But, Monsieur," objected la Peyrade, "without yet understanding you, I would observe that my uncle died so poor as to be buried under the auspices of public charity."

"Your uncle was a man of rare ability, but his character had a frivolous side, which compromised his whole career. He was extravagant, pleasure-loving, and had no thought for the future."

"Then, what encouragement can you offer me to follow in his footsteps?"

"But supposing I myself, my dear young gentleman, should show you the way?"

"You, sir!" said la Peyrade in amazement.

"Yes, I, who was brought up by your uncle, and afterward was his protector and Providence; I, whose power has been growing nearly every day, for something like a half century; I, who am rich, who see governments, as they tumble like card-houses one after another, come to me for security and sinews; I, who am the manager of a great puppet show, including columbines like Madame de Godollo; I, who to-morrow, if it were necessary for the success of one of my comedies or dramas, would appear before you wearing the Order of the Legion of Honor, or of the Garter, or of The Golden Fleece? Do you want to know why neither you nor I shall ever die of poison, and why, more fortunate than contemporary sovereigns, I can bequeath my sceptre to the successor of my own choice? It is because, like yourself, my young friend, in spite of your southern temperament, I am cool and calculating, because I never lost my time dangling about a door; because, when I was called upon to exhibit warmth, I never felt it but superficially. It is more than likely that you have heard of me. Well,

for your benefit, I will open the window in the cloud that conceals me. Look at me, and look well; I have neither a cloven foot nor a tail at the end of my spine; quite the contrary, I am one of the most harmless gentlemen of leisure in the Saint-Sulpice Quarter, where, I may say, I have been universally respected and esteemed for twenty-five years under the name of du Portail, whereas to you, with your kind permission, I shall be known as Corentin!"

"Corentin!" cried la Peyrade, in surprise and alarm.

"Yes, sir, and you perceive that, revealing the secret to you, I put my hand on you, and enlist you. Corentin, 'the greatest police agent of modern times,' as the author of an article in the 'Biography of Living Men,' says of me, in justice to whom I may remark that he knows nothing whatever about my life."

"Certainly, Monsieur," said la Peyrade, "I will keep your secret, but as to the place you are so kindly offering me under you—"

"Appals you, or at least frightens you," quickly put in the ex-gentleman of leisure. "Before even examining into the thing, you are scared by a word. The po-o-olice! The secret po-o-olice! You would be ashamed, would you not, to share in the tremendous prejudice which brands that body?"

"Assuredly it is a useful institution, but I do not think it has been slandered in every case. If its doings are quite honorable, why do its members live in hiding?"

"Because all that threatens the safety of society," answered Corentin, "and which it is the mission of the police to suppress, is prepared and plotted in the dark."

"Monsieur," said la Peyrade, "where a sentiment is universal there is no longer a question of prejudice but of

opinion, and that opinion must be the rule for every man who wishes for his own respect or that of others."

"And when you were cheating that bankrupt notary," exclaimed Corentin, "when you were robbing a corpse to enrich the Thuilliers, you claimed your own respect and that of the barristers' association! And who knows but what your life has worse actions to show. I am a more honest man than you, because, outside of my duties, I have not a single doubtful deed to reproach myself with, and whenever an opportunity to do good presented itself I have done it everywhere and always. Do you think that to take care of this mad girl for eleven years has been a bed of roses? But she was the daughter of your uncle, my oldest friend, and now, when feeling that my days are declining, I come to you with hard cash, and ask you to relieve me of this burden—"

"What!" exclaimed Théodose, "do you say the mad girl is my uncle la Peyrade's daughter?"

"Yes, the girl I want you to marry is that man's daughter. Now, in spite of your uncle's strict silence about his family, do I not know as much about it as if it were my own? Before allotting you to your cousin, was I not able to supply myself with the fullest information? You stick out your tongue at the police, but where would you be without it? Your uncle belonged to it, and, thanks to that fact, was the confidant, I might almost say the friend, of Louis XVIII., who took infinite pleasure in his conversation. Your cousin is of the same line. Your character and mind, the foolish position you have put yourself in, your whole being—all gravitates toward the solution I propose to you, which is nothing less, if you please, than to take my place, to be Corentin's successor! And then you think I

have no hold upon you, and imagine you can escape me by standing on that silly middle class pride!"

La Peyrade must have been more amenable to persuasion than he had given token of, for the great police agent's ardor, and the sort of appropriation made of his person, brought an amused smile to his face.

Corentin had risen, in the meantime, and was striding up and down the room where this scene was being enacted, and talking, as if to himself—"The police! Who is it that despises the police? Only the fools who know no better than to scoff at their own safeguard. Abolish the police, and you abolish civilization. Does the police ask for the esteem of such people? No, it only wants to instil one emotion into them: fear, the great lever by which humanity is governed, that infamous race whose loathsome instincts can hardly be kept in check by God, and hell-fire, and the executioner, and the constable, all combined. Are you, too," and he paused, casting a contemptuous glance at la Peyrade, "one of the dolts who see nothing in the police but a collection of spies and informers, and who never suspect in them astute politicians, diplomats of the highest ability, or short-robed Richelieus? Why, Mercury, my dear sir, Mercury, the cleverest of the pagan deities, was he not the police incarnate? Is Monsieur the Prefect of Police, an honored Minister, greatly respected, and made much of, nothing more than a spy? Very well, sir, I am the prefect of the secret police of diplomacy and higher politics, and you balk at the throne which I, like Charles V., grown old, want to abdicate. To appear small, and accomplish huge things; to live in a cave as comfortably furnished as this, and command the light; to have an invisible army at your beck, always ready, always devoted,

always obedient; to know the underside of everything; never to be pulled by any string, because we hold them all in our own hands; to see through every wall, penetrate all secrets, and probe every heart and every conscience —this, sir, is what frightens you! And yet, you were not afraid to wallow in the Thuillier mire, you, a thoroughbred, allowed yourself to be harnessed to a cab, to the ignoble tasks of getting this upstart elected deputy, and of editing his middle class newspaper! To succeed me in office, and marry your cousin, with a dowry of not less than five hundred thousand francs, that is my offer to you. I am not asking for an immediate answer. I should have no confidence in a decision that had not been well weighed. To-morrow I shall be here all day, and may my desire become yours!"

Then, dismissing his visitor with a little dry, curt nod, he said—"I will not say good-by, but *au revoir*, Monsieur de la Peyrade." Upon which Corentin stepped to a side-board, which bore everything needful to make a glass of sugar-water. This he had really earned, and, taking no further notice of the Provençal, who went out somewhat abashed, he gave himself up entirely to that prosaical pursuit.

Was it necessary to his conversion that, the day after his encounter with Corentin, la Peyrade should be oppressed by a visit from Madame Lambert, who had become a troublesome and importunate creditor? As the tempter had said, it seemed as if his character, and mind, and ambitions, and past follies were all dragging him down a precipitous slope, where the sudden solution of all his difficulties so strangely presented itself. Fatality—if the phrase be permissible—poured a rich shower of entanglements over him that

drowned him. It was now the 31st of October, and the legal vacation was drawing to a close. On the 2d of November the courts would reopen, and the barrister received a notice to appear before the association just as Madame Lambert was leaving him. To the woman, who had been pressing him hard to pay her, on the plea of quitting her place at Monsieur Picot's, and returning to her own part of the country, he said—"Call again the day after to-morrow, at the same hour, and your money will be ready for you."

The behest which summoned him before his peers he answered by denying the right of the association to bring him to book for an occurrence in his private life. The reply was unequivocal, and would inevitably result in the ruling off of his name from the roll of barristers pleading in the royal courts. At any rate, his letter had a flavor of dignity and protest which saved his self-respect. He also wrote to Thuillier, apprising him of the fact that his visit to du Portail had resulted in the necessity of his entering upon a different match. He therefore released Thuillier from his word, and took back his own. It was all put quite coldly, without a syllable of regret for the alliance he was renouncing. In a postscript he added: "We will talk over my connection with the paper," thus hinting that he might not wish to maintain it. He was careful to make a copy of this letter, and when, an hour later, in Corentin's study, he was asked what the upshot of his reflections was, by way of reply he handed the great man of the secret police the matrimonial resignation document he had just drawn up.

"That will do," was Corentin's comment. "But you may have to keep your position with the newspaper for some time. The candidature of this idiot is inconvenient to the government, and we must discuss some method

of tripping up our municipal councillor. You, in your capacity of editor-in-chief, omnipotent, have perhaps a good trick up your sleeve, and I presume your conscience does not revolt against playing it."

"No, forsooth!" said the other, "the recollection of the humiliations I was so long subjected to will whet my appetite for vengeance against that vile middle class brood!"

"Take care, you are young, and must guard against those movements of the bile. In our austere trade, we love nobody, and hate nobody. Our people are merely so many wooden or ivory chessmen, according to their quality, with whom we play our games. We must be like the sword that cuts as it is bid, but which cares only whether its edge is sharp, having neither human sympathies nor antipathies.—Now, let us talk about your cousin; I suppose you are somewhat curious to be presented to her."

La Peyrade had no need to affect eagerness, since his was most genuine.

"Lydie de la Peyrade," said Corentin, "is nearly thirty, though you would not take her for more than twenty. She is fair and slender, and her face, which is beautifully refined, is conspicuous for its angelically sweet expression. Bereft of her sanity by the dreadful catastrophe that ended her father's life, her monomania is of a very touching kind: she constantly has in her arms, or lying by her side, a bundle of linen rags, which she nurses and tends as though it were a sick child. With the exception of Bruno—my manservant—and myself, both whom she recognizes, she sees in every other man a doctor, whom she consults and listens to as if he were an oracle. The crisis, which occurred some time ago in her health, convinced Horace Bianchon, that

prince of medical science, that if only the reality could be substituted for this fictitious motherhood, the girl's reason would return. Would it not be a labor of love to bring light back again into this soul, where it is only veiled? And the bond of relationship, which nature has created between you, seems to point to you especially as the person to undertake this cure, of whose success, I may repeat, Bianchon and the eminent consulting physicians do not entertain the least doubt. I will now take you to Lydie, and remember to play your doctor's part, for the only way to arouse her from her habitual gentleness is to ignore her perpetual mania for medical advice."

After passing through several rooms, la Peyrade was about to enter that generally occupied by Lydie, when she did not want more space for walking up and down, and rocking her imaginary baby. But they suddenly stopped at hearing two or three magnificent chords struck on a piano of the finest tone.

"What is that?" asked la Peyrade.

"It is Lydie," replied Corentin, with something that might have been taken for paternal pride. "She is an admirable musician, and if she does not write charming songs, as she did when she was mentally sound, she still renders most affecting ones with her fingers. But let us sit down and listen; if we went in now, the musical concert would end at once and the medical consultation begin."

La Peyrade was astonished at hearing an impromptu in which a rare combination of original inspiration and technical skill disclosed to his impressionable nature worlds of emotion as vast as they were new. Corentin enjoyed the surprise to which the Provençal gave vent in successive admiring exclamations, and praising up his wares, the old

man said—"That is well played, is it not? Liszt does not reach up to her ankles!"

After a very lively scherzo, the first few notes of an adagio movement were heard.

"Ah, she is going to sing," said Corentin, remembering the melody.

"Does she sing, too?"

"Like Pasta and Malibran! Just listen to that!"

Indeed, after a few bars of a ritornella, a voice sounded upon the Provençal's ear which thrilled him to the depths of his soul.

"How you are carried away by music!" said Corentin. "You two were certainly made for one another!"

La Peyrade silenced the speaker with a gesture, and his emotion, growing from moment to moment with each note of the song, at last culminated in this cry, by which, in his turn, Corentin was much impressed—"Great Heavens! it is the same air and the same voice."

"Should you," asked the great police agent, "happen to have met Lydie somewhere?"

"I do not know—I do not think so," answered la Peyrade in a broken voice, "and, in any case, it must have been very long ago—but that air—that voice—it seems to me—"

"Come in," said Corentin. And suddenly opening the door, he pulled in the Provençal after him.

Her back turned to the intruders, and the noise of the piano preventing her from hearing what was passing behind her, Lydie was unconscious of their entrance.

"Look," said Corentin, "do you remember her now?"

La Peyrade took a few steps forward, and no sooner had he seen the lunatic's profile than he wildly clasped his hands over his head, with the exclamation, "'t is she!"

"Silence!" commanded Corentin.

But attracted by Théodose's outcry, Lydie looked round, and noticing Corentin, said—"How unkind and annoying you are, to come and disturb me like this! You know very well I do not like people to listen to my playing. Ah, but I see," she added, catching sight of la Peyrade's black coat, "you have brought the doctor. That is very good of you, as I was going to ask you to send for him. The child has done nothing but cry all the morning. I have tried in vain to sing her to sleep, but it is of no use." And she went into a corner, where, by means of two chairs placed upside down and some sofa cushions, she had constructed something resembling a cradle, and came back with what she called her child.

While making toward la Peyrade she carried her precious burden with one hand, and with the other was arranging her *little darling's* cap, with no eyes for anything else. As she approached him, Théodose, trembling and pale, and with a fixed stare, and now in full view of Mademoiselle de la Peyrade's face, recoiled with an expression evincing horror, and did not stop until a chair behind him upset his balance, and received him in his fall.

Corentin, knowing how Lydie had lost her reason, had already divined and understood the rest, but it was his intention to illuminate the darkness with the strong light of evidence.

"Look, doctor," Lydie meanwhile was saying, as she removed the outer wrappings, sticking the pins between her lips as she did so, "how thin she is getting, day by day!"

La Peyrade was incapable of an answer. His face buried in his handkerchief, his breath came in short gasps, which would have prohibited him from uttering a word.

Then, with one of the impulses of feverish impatience to which her mental state disposed her—"But, doctor, why don't you look at her?" she cried, seizing Théodose violently by the arm, and forcing him to reveal his features. "O God!" she cried, directly she saw the Provençal's face.

And letting the parcel of rags fall that she was holding in her arms, she started far back. Her eyes grew haggard. Quickly drawing her white hands back and forth over her forehead, and then through her hair, she seemed to be making an effort to revive her dormant and rebellious memory. Then, like a frightened filly that has just sniffed danger, she came up slowly to the Provençal, and bending half over to get a closer view of his face, which he was lowering and trying to hide from her, she scrutinized him for a few seconds, amid an unendurable silence. All of a sudden, a terrible cry wrung itself from her breast, and rushing into Corentin's arms and clinging to him frantically she exclaimed: "Save me! Save me! It is he!"

And her outstretched finger seemed to nail the object of her aversion to the spot.

After this outburst, she stammered a few incoherent words, and her eyes filled with tears. Corentin felt the muscles relaxing, which a moment before were holding him like a vise, and the unconscious Lydie sank into his arms, without la Peyrade, who was utterly unstrung, even thinking of assisting him to hold her up and lay her on the sofa.

"Do not stay here," said Corentin. "Go into my study, and I will join you there in a few minutes."

After a very short lapse of time, the invalid having been left in the care of Katt and Bruno, and Perrache having been despatched post-haste to Doctor Bianchon, Corentin came back to la Peyrade.

"You see," he said solemnly, "that in pursuing the idea of this marriage so earnestly, I was obeying the voice of Heaven."

"Monsieur," said la Peyrade contritely, "I have a confession to make—"

"Which is superfluous," interrupted Corentin. "You can tell me nothing new. Most happily, Providence has ordained that nothing of what has happened is irreparable, and we must hope that the past will be retrieved."

"But should I not always be an object of horror to her, and could I possibly make the reparation that you speak of?"

"The doctor, Monsieur!" said Katt, opening the door.

"How is Mademoiselle Lydie?" la Peyrade anxiously asked the woman.

"She is very quiet now," answered Katt, "and when I brought her the bundle of rags, in order to induce her to go to bed, which she refused to do, saying that she was not ill, she observed in quite an astonished tone: 'What do you expect me to do with that, my dear Katt? If you want me to play with a doll, get me one that is a little better made.'"

"You see," said Corentin, grasping the Provençal by the hand, "you will have been Achilles' spear." Upon which he went out with Katt to see Bianchon.

Théodose, left to himself, had been sitting for some time indulging in such reflections as may be imagined, when the door of the study opened once more, and Bruno, the manservant, ushered in Cérizet.

"Aha, I thought so!" exclaimed the copying clerk. "I thought you would end up by going to du Portail! And how is the marriage progressing?"

"It is rather about your own that one would naturally ask for news."

"Oh, then you have been told? Yes, it is quite true, my dear boy. There must be an end some day to cruising on stormy seas. You know whom I am marrying?"

"Yes, a young actress, Mademoiselle Olympe Cardinal, a friend of the Minard family, who are subscribing thirty thousand francs to her dowry."

"Which, added to thirty thousand promised me by du Portail in the event of your marriage with Lydie," boasted Cérizet, "and the old twenty-five thousand which the other marriage—that never happened—was worth to me, makes a fat little sum of eighty-five thousand francs! With that and a pretty wife, a man would be forsaken by all the powers of heaven and earth if he could not do some business. But my first transaction must be with yourself. Du Portail, who is too busy to see me, has sent me here to confer with you as to how Thuillier's election is to be spoiled. Have you any ideas on the subject?"

"No, and I confess that in the frame of mind I am in, owing to my recent interview with Monsieur du Portail, I do not feel equal to inventive effort."

"The situation is this," Cérizet went on. "The government has the choice of another candidate who has not yet come forward, because it was not easy at first to make terms with him. In the meantime, Thuillier's candidature has been moving on. Minard, who was counted on to create a diversion, stupidly stood still in his corner, and the seizure of your pamphlet gave your nominee a certain aroma of popularity. In short, the Ministry was afraid he would be elected, and nothing could be more distasteful to them than such an event. Pompous fools like Thuillier are fearfully

embarrassing in the opposition. They are jugs without handles; one does know where to take hold of them."

"Monsieur Cérizet," said la Peyrade, assuming an air of patronage, and also desiring to know how far the usurer was in Corentin's confidence, "I see you are quite well informed as to the private feeling of the government—"

Here he was interrupted by Corentin's reappearance, who at once said—"All is going well. There seems to be very good prospects of her reason being restored. Bianchon, from whom it is my duty not to conceal anything, requests an interview with you. And my dear Monsieur Cérizet," said he, turning to the other, "I will ask you to kindly postpone our little Thuillier debate until this evening."

"So, you have got him at last!" exclaimed Cérizet, slapping la Peyrade on the shoulder.

"You know what I promised you," said Corentin, "and you may rely on getting it."

Cérizet left the place in high glee.

On the day following this, when Corentin, la Peyrade, and Cérizet were to have met, with a view to besieging Thuillier's candidature, that distinguished statesman was discussing with his sister the letter in which Théodose had declared his surrender of Céleste's hand, and he was particularly exercised over the postscriptum, which intimated that the Provençal would not remain editor-in-chief of the "Echo de la Bièvre." Henri, his servant, came in to ask if he would see Monsieur Cérizet.

Thuillier's first impulse was to have the unwelcome visitor turned out. But thinking better of it, it occurred to him that in the dilemma which la Peyrade's departure might leave him in at any moment, Cérizet might prove of

great value. He consequently ordered him to be shown in. Nevertheless, his welcome to Cérizet was very cold, and in some degree expectant. As for Cérizet, he behaved without diffidence, and like a man who has calculated eventualities.

"Well, my dear sir," said he to Thuillier, "are you beginning to get a little enlightenment with regard to Monsieur de la Peyrade?"

"What do you mean by that?" asked the old dandy of the Empire.

"Why, the man who, after intriguing to marry your god-daughter, breaks off the match quite abruptly, as one day he will cancel the contract in which you gave him the lion's share of authority in the newspaper—this man is hardly worthy of your future implicit confidence."

"Then," Thuillier asked eagerly, "you have some knowledge of la Peyrade's intentions not to continue on the newspaper?"

"No," answered the banker of the poor. "Owing to the relations now existing between us, you will understand that I have not seen him lately, and still less been honored with his confidence. But if I may draw a conclusion from the gentleman's well-known character, you may take it for granted that the very day he finds it to his advantage to leave you in the lurch, he will cast you off as he would an old coat. I speak from my own experience."

"Had you any dealings with him before you were manager of the newspaper?" asked Thuillier.

"I should think so!" exclaimed Cérizet. "That house affair in which you were concerned was my discovery. He was to have brought us together with a view to my becoming principal tenant with the privilege of subletting.

But the unfortunate adventure of the bidding interfered, and he profited by it to oust me and pocket all of the plums."

"Plums?" said Thuillier. "I cannot see that there were very many of them, and apart from the marriage which he now refuses—"

"What?" broke in the usurer. "What about the ten thousand francs which he got out of you, alleging it to be for the Cross you are still waiting for, and then the twenty-five thousand due to Madame Lambert which you guaranteed to pay, and which you are likely to pay, like a good boy?"

"What do I hear?" cried Brigitte, jumping up. "You have been guaranteeing twenty-five thousand francs?"

"Yes, Mademoiselle," said Cérizet. "There was a mystery connected with that money the woman loaned him, or was supposed to have loaned him, and, even if I have not put my hand on the true explanation, there was certainly some dirty business involved. That la Peyrade was clever enough to whitewash himself in the eyes of your brother, and to figure as injured innocence and indispensable genius."

"But," inquired Thuillier, "how did you know that I stood security for Monsieur de la Peyrade, if you have not seen him since?"

"Through the pious servant, who tells every one that now she is quite sure of being paid back."

"Well, now," said Brigitte to her brother, "you are a nice man of business!"

"Mademoiselle," continued Cérizet, "I wanted to give Monsieur Thuillier a little fright, but I do not think you will lose anything. Without knowing any particulars about

the marriage la Peyrade is looking forward to, it seems improbable the family will leave the burden of those two shameful debts upon him, and if necessary, I myself will act as intermediary in your cause."

"Monsieur," said Thuillier, "while thanking you for your kind intentions, allow me to say they surprise me a little, for the manner in which we parted gave me a very different opinion of you."

"Surely you do not think I bear you any resentment on that account! I was sorry for you—that was all. I saw that you were under the spell, and told myself that you must be allowed to have your experience with la Peyrade, though I knew well enough that the day of justice would dawn for me soon. With that gentleman, evil practices never remain in abeyance long."

"Pardon me, but I do not consider the breaking off of the marriage in question an evil practice. It happened by common consent, as it were."

"And the hole he proposes to leave you in by deserting his editor's post without warning, and the debt he has loaded on your shoulders—does that meet with your approval too?"

"Monsieur Cérizet," said Thuillier, still remaining on his guard, "as I once said to la Peyrade, no man is indispensable, and should the editorship of my newspaper become vacant I am quite sure that numerous applicants would apply anxiously enough for the place."

"Is this aimed at me? If so, you have missed fire, because even were you to do me the honor of asking my assistance, I could not possibly give it. I became disgusted with the newspapers long ago. I somehow let la Peyrade entangle me in another campaign with you, but the venture

having brought out unpleasant issues, I promised myself never to be caught again. It was an entirely different matter I wanted to talk to you about."

"Indeed?"

"Yes," replied Cérizet. "Remembering your square treatment of me in the affair of the house, I thought I could do no better than go to you again regarding an opportunity of the same kind that lately has come under my notice; but I shall not imitate la Peyrade, I shall not tell you that I want to marry your goddaughter, and that I am acting out of pure friendship and devotion. It is a commercial transaction, and I expect my proper share. Besides, I am thinking that Mademoiselle Thuillier must find the letting of this property a heavy undertaking, for I observed just now that your shops are all empty still. Now, if she wishes to renew the idea of a principal tenant, which la Peyrade killed, that might enter into consideration when we come to the division of profits. You now know the purpose of my visit, and you see that the newspaper has nothing to do with it."

"But what about this new house?" said Brigitte. "You must give us some details first."

"That is exactly what you forgot to find out in the case of the other. You got this house for next to nothing, but you had some trouble owing to a higher bid. In this case, there is a farm in Beauce, which has just been sold for a mere trifle, and at a slight advance in the price you could get it at an absurdly easy bargain."

We will excuse the reader from listening to Cérizet's exposition, which was very lucid and attractive, and took a strong hold upon the old maid's cupidity. Thuillier himself, in spite of all his suspicion and cautiousness, acknowl-

edged that the new enterprise gave high promise of being a successful speculation.

"Only we must see the place first," insisted Brigitte.

It may be remembered that in the purchase of the other house she declined to commit herself to la Peyrade, however slightly, without first inspecting the premises.

"Nothing can be easier," said Cérizet, "I myself, in the event of our coming to an agreement, should wish for a thorough investigation. I had thought of making a little excursion, one of these days; so, if you like, I will hire a post-chaise at once, in order that we may reach our destination early in the morning, and be back here in the evening in time for dinner."

"But the post," objected Brigitte, "is rather a grand way of travelling. It seems to me that the stage-coach—"

"When you go by stage-coach," answered Cérizet, "you never know when you will arrive. Anyhow, you need not be alarmed about the expense. I should have gone alone if you had not been coming, and therefore can offer you two seats in my chaise. If the affair comes to anything, when we are ready to settle up accounts, we will pay for the journey between us."

To a miser, small parings are often a determining factor when large sums are at stake. After a little formal hesitation, Brigitte concurred in Cérizet's suggestion, and the same day the three of them set out for Chartres. Cérizet enjoined upon Thuillier the advisability of not mentioning this journey to la Peyrade, for fear the Provençal might take advantage of his absence to concoct some piece of mischief.

The next day, about five o'clock in the evening, the trio had returned, and brother and sister, who, while they were with Cérizet, had not been free to exchange impressions,

were of the opinion that the bargain would be an excellent one. They had found land of high quality, buildings and sheds in perfect condition, fine cattle, and good implements, and to become mistress of a rural estate was in Brigitte's eyes the top rung of the ladder of prosperity.

"Minard," said she, "has only his town house and his money, but we shall have land, agricultural property; no one is really rich without it."

Thuillier was not so much infatuated with these prospects —whose realization was still a little remote—as to lose sight of his newspaper and his candidature. His first thought was to ask for the issue which had appeared that morning.

"It has not come," answered the servant.

"How well the delivery is attended to," said Thuillier, annoyed; "not even the proprietor gets a copy."

And although the dinner hour was near, and after the journey he was more inclined to take a bath than to go to the Rue Saint-Dominique-d'Enfer, Thuillier nevertheless took a cab and drove to the office of the "Echo." Fresh disappointment awaited him there. The paper was "made up." Every one had gone away, including la Peyrade, and Coffinet, who had gone to the races, had taken away the key of the cupboard containing the files. So the unhappy owner had to do without the paper he had come so far to get. It would be impossible to describe Thuillier's wrath. He tore up and down the editorial room with great strides, talking to himself aloud, as one does under violent excitement.

"I will kick them all out of doors!" he cried. But we are obliged to mitigate the actual form of expression his furious energy took. As he was uttering his anathema, he heard a knock at the door, to which he replied impatiently and angrily, "Come in!"

In walked Minard, who at once threw himself into Thuillier's arms.

"My dear friend! My most excellent friend!" began the mayor of the eleventh district, following up his embrace with vigorous handshakes.

"Well, well, what is it?" said Thuillier, totally at a loss to comprehend these fervent demonstrations.

"My dear fellow," continued Minard, "what admirable conduct! How chivalrous, and how disinterested! I need hardly say that it has had a tremendous effect in the whole district!"

"But what is it, I ask you again?" exclaimed Thuillier, more impatient than ever.

"The article, the decision!" said Minard. "The whole thing is so noble, so elevated!"

"But what article, what decision?" shouted the proprietor of the "Echo," beside himself with wrath.

"This morning's article," answered Minard.

"This morning's article?" repeated Thuillier.

"Come now, did you write it while you were asleep, or do you indulge in unconscious heroism?"

"I tell you I have not written an article!" cried Thuillier. "I have been out of Paris since yesterday, and I do not even know what is in this morning's paper. Not an office boy is here to give me a copy!"

"I have one here," said Minard, taking the much-coveted issue out of his pocket. "You may not have written the article, but you must have inspired it, and in any case the credit is yours."

Thuillier snatched the paper from Minard's hand, and devoured rather than read the following:

" 'The proprietor of this regenerated journal has long

enough endured uncomplainingly the treacherous insinuations which a venal press showers upon every good citizen who, in the strength of his honest convictions, refuses to pass under the Caudine Forks of the powers that be. It has been said too often of a man who has given sufficient proofs of integrity and unselfishness in his important office of a Paris edile, that he is but an ambitious schemer. Monsieur Jérôme Thuillier has in his lofty dignity of mind ignored these coarse insults, and, encouraged by his scornful silence, subventioned scriveners have said that a certain newspaper, which is the outcome of sincere purpose and the most large-hearted patriotism, was only the footstool of a single man vulgarly gambling for a deputy's seat. Monsieur Jérôme Thuillier has stood unmoved by these accusations, because justice and truth are patient, and because he intended to crush the reptile with one blow. The day of retribution is at hand.'

"That devil of a la Peyrade!" said Thuillier, after the last sentence. "How he hits the mark!"

"Yes, it is magnificent!" agreed Minard.

Thuillier read on aloud—"'Every one, friend and foe alike, will do Monsieur Jérôme Thuillier the justice to admit that he has done nothing to capture the nomination which was voluntarily offered him. But since his actions have been so odiously distorted and shamefully travestied, Monsieur Jérôme Thuillier owes it to himself, and still more to the great national party, to whose rank and file he belongs, to show an example which shall put the base sycophants of power to confusion.'

"La Peyrade is really describing me very well," said Thuillier, stopping in his reading once more; "and I now understand why he ordered the paper not to be sent to me:

he wanted to enjoy my surprise. '*Which shall put the base sycophants of power to confusion*,' " he repeated. " 'Monsieur Thuillier, far from founding an opposition journal in order to push and support his election, at the moment when the outlook for this election seems most propitious to himself and most desperate for his rivals, hereby publicly declares in the most formal, the most absolute, and the most irrevocable manner that he WITHDRAWS FROM THE CONTEST!'

"What is this? What?" cried Thuillier, not knowing whether to believe his eyes.

"Oh, come now!" said the mayor; and as Thuillier looked too bewildered to go on reading, Minard took the paper from his hand, and himself continued:

"—'That he withdraws from the contest, and begs the electors to transfer to Monsieur Minard, the mayor of the eleventh district, and his friend and colleague in municipal office, all the votes they appeared ready to honor himself with.' "

"Why, this is infamous!" cried Thuillier, recovering his speech. "You have bought that Jesuit of a la Peyrade!"

"Do you mean to say," asked Minard, amazed at Thuillier's remark, "that the article was not agreed upon between you?"

"The scoundrel sneaked it into the paper while I was away! Now I know why he would not let a copy be sent me!"

"My dear fellow," said Minard, "what you are saying will hardly sound plausible to the rest of the world."

"But it is treason, pure and simple, I tell you! It is a vile ambush! Withdraw from the contest? Why should I withdraw?"

"Of course you understand that if your confidence has

been abused I deeply regret it, but I have already had my circulars distributed, and now all I can say is, good luck to the luckiest!"

"You need not talk! This is a performance paid for out of your pocket!"

"Monsieur Thuillier," threatened Minard, "I advise you not to repeat those words, unless you are prepared to answer for them!"

Fortunately, Thuillier was spared the proof of his private valor by the truant Coffinet, who had in the meanwhile returned, and who, throwing open the office door, grandly announced: "Messieurs, the electors of the twelfth district!"

The district was represented by five persons. A chemist, the leader of the deputation, addressed Thuillier in the following speech: "We have come, sir, after taking cognizance of an article which appeared this morning in the 'Echo de la Bièvre,' to ask you about the exact origin and significance of said article, thinking it incredible that after soliciting our suffrages, you now, at election time, should in a fit of misplaced puritanism throw disorder and strife among us, and possibly insure the victory of the Ministerial candidate. A nominee is not his own master; he is the servant of the constituents who have promised to honor him with their votes. Moreover," continued the orator, casting a glance at Minard, "the presence in this place of a candidate you are taking the trouble to recommend to us, indicates connivance between yourself and him, and I need not ask who is being deceived."

"No, not at all, gentlemen," said Thuillier. "I am not giving up my candidature. This article was written and published without my consent. To-morrow you will see the denial in my own paper, and at the same time you will

learn that the wretch who betrayed me has ceased to be a member of my staff."

"So that, in spite of your declarations to the contrary, you still wish to be the opposition candidate?"

"Yes, gentlemen, to the very last; and I will ask you to use all your influence in the district to neutralize this plot officially, pending the appearance of my most emphatic disavowal of the article."

"Very good, very good!" said the electors.

"And as to the presence here of Monsieur Minard, my rival, I did not ask him to come, and in fact was engaged in a lively dispute with him just before you entered."

"Very good, very good!" said the electors again.

And after cordially shaking hands with the chemist, Thuillier escorted the deputation to the end of the room. Turning back, he said to Minard—"My dear friend, I retract the words that offended you; but you can now see how genuine my indignation was."

Coffinet opened the door once more, announcing—"Messieurs, the electors of the eleventh district!"

The present deputation consisted of seven men. Their spokesman, a merchant hosier, thus addressed Thuillier—"Monsieur, it was with profound admiration that we learned this morning, through your paper, of the great act of civic virtue which touched us all universally. Your retirement gives proof of very unusual disinterestedness, and the esteem of your fellow-citizens is—"

"Permit me," Thuillier stopped him—"I must not allow you to go on. The article you are so kind to congratulate me about was published by mistake."

"What?" asked the hosier, "you are not going to retire? And do you imagine that beside Monsieur Minard's

candidature—whose presence here seems to me rather peculiar, under the circumstance—yours has the faintest chance of success?"

"Sir," said Thuillier, "pray ask the electors to wait for to-morrow's issue, when I shall print the most categorical denial. To-day's article proceeds from a misunderstanding."

"So much the worse, Monsieur," replied the hosier, "if you are missing an opportunity to place yourself, in the opinion of your fellow-citizens, on an equality with Washington and other great men of antiquity!"

"Wait till to-morrow, gentlemen. I am none the less sensible of your kindness, and when you know all the truth I hope you will see that I am not unworthy of your esteem."

"What a pretty mess this is!" said an elector out loud.

"Yes," chimed in another, "it looks as if we were being made fools of!"

"Gentlemen," remonstrated the leader of the deputation, "we must wait till to-morrow, when we shall see the candidate's explanation."

After which the second deputation took itself off.

It is not very likely that Thuillier would have gone further than the first door with them; at any rate, he was stopped by la Peyrade, who at this moment came in.

"I was at your house just now," said the Provençal, "and was told that I should find you here."

"And no doubt you have come to account for the extraordinary article you took the liberty of publishing in my name."

"Exactly. The man you know of, and whose powerful hand you have already felt, yesterday made known to me—in your interest—the feeling of the government. From this I derived the persuasion that defeat stared you in the face.

I therefore tried to pave for you a dignified and honorable road of retreat."

"Very well, sir," said Thuillier. "But do you know that from the present moment you cease to belong to the staff of the newspaper?"

"I myself came to inform you of the fact."

"And no doubt to have the financial question regulated?"

"Gentlemen," said Minard, "I see that you have business to transact, and so I will make my bow."

"Here are ten thousand francs," said la Peyrade, as soon as Minard had left the room, "which I will ask you to hand over to Mademoiselle Brigitte. And here I return the document by virtue of which you guaranteed the payment of twenty-five thousand francs to Madame Lambert, whose receipt I hold for the money, as you see."

"Quite right, Monsieur," said Thuillier.

La Peyrade bowed and retired.

"Viper!" hissed Thuillier, as he saw him go.

"Cérizet's expression was correct: a pompous fool," said la Peyrade.

The blow struck at Thuillier's election was fatal, but it profited Minard nothing. While they were wrestling for the votes, came a man patronized by royalty, with his pockets full of tobacco licenses and other electoral currency, and this third rogue slipped in between the other two, who were busy maligning each other.

It need hardly be said that Brigitte did not get the farm in Beauce, which was only a mirage to draw Thuillier away from Paris, while la Peyrade was manipulating the "Echo de la Bièvre." The famous article was not only a service rendered the government, but revenge for all past humiliations. Thuillier had his suspicions of Cérizet's complicity,

but the usurer successfully exonerated himself, and by bartering off the newspaper, which had become a veritable nightmare to its luckless owner, washed himself as white as snow. Indirectly bought by Corentin, the wretched opposition sheet became an organ of the police, and circulated in low taverns on Sundays.

About a month after the scene which brought la Peyrade the assurance that by an error in the past he had sealed his fate in the future, he married Lydie, who now had long intervals of lucidity, but who would only regain the plenitude of her faculities at the time and upon the condition specified by the doctors.

One morning Corentin's successor-elect was in his study with him. Taking part in Corentin's labors, la Peyrade was serving his apprenticeship under the great master, and learning the difficult and delicate duties that were to fall to his lot. Corentin, however, thought his pupil was not taking his initiation in the proper spirit of enthusiasm, that he was not putting heart and soul into his work. He saw that a certain sense of degradation weighed on the young man. Time would get the better of the wound, which had not yet gathered to a scar.

Opening a number of envelopes containing reports from his agents, Corentin ran over them with a glance of the eye. Most of them were much less valuable than one might suppose, and he threw them disdainfully into a waste-paper basket, whence they were taken away, to be burned in a heap. But one of these reports seemed to hold the great man's attention. While reading it, an occasional smile flitted over his face, and when he had done, he passed the sheets to la Peyrade, with the remark—"Here is something that will interest you. You will see that our profession,

which you think so gloomy, is sometimes enlivened by a comedy. Before reading this report, you must learn that it comes from one Henri, whom Madame Kormorn placed with the Thuilliers as their manservant."

"So," said la Peyrade, "you also distribute your agents as servants?"

"Sometimes we do," replied Corentin. "If you want to know everything, you must utilize all resources. But a great deal of rubbish is talked about this. It is not true that the police makes a regular system of employing all footmen and chambermaids to form a network of spies over the whole of private life. There is nothing absolute or fixed in our methods; we act as time and occasion require. I wanted to keep an eye and an ear on the Thuilliers, so I sent the Godollo woman. She, on her side, established one of our agents there, as her assistant, an intelligent fellow, you will perceive. But, under other circumstances, I might have a servant arrested, coming to sell me his master's secrets, and have a message sent the person that his surroundings were not trustworthy."

La Peyrade then read the report of the agent known as Henri, which was addressed to "The Director of the Secret Police," and contained what follows:

"I did not stay with the little baron. He is a man completely taken up with his pleasures, and I should never have heard anything in his house worth reporting. I have found another place, which would seem to be of interest to you, as relating to the mission intrusted me by Madame de Godollo. I therefore hasten to acquaint you with the facts. The house where I am employed is inhabited by an old professor called Picot, who lives on the second floor, Place de la Madeleine, in the apartment formerly occupied by my old

masters, the Thuilliers. They left this house some time ago to return to the Latin Quarter. Mademoiselle Brigitte never was enamored of these regions, where her want of education made her ill at ease. Because I spoke French correctly, she called me 'the orator,' and she could not endure Monsieur Pascal, her porter, seeing that, as beadle of the Madeleine parish, he has some manners. And she even complained of the shopkeepers in the square behind the church, where she naturally bought her supplies, as giving themselves 'competent airs,' and because they did not use bad language, as they do at the central market, and also because they laughed in her face when she began to haggle about prices. She let her house to a Monsieur Cérizet, as principal tenant, a very ugly man, whose nose is all eaten away, for a rent of fifty-five thousand francs. He seems to be a man of business. He recently married an actress from a small theatre, and expected to live in the apartment on the second floor, when Monsieur Picot, arriving from England with his wife, a very rich Englishwoman, saw the house and offered a handsome figure. Monsieur Cérizet sold him his interest in it, and that is how, through the good offices of Monsieur Pascal, the porter, with whom I had kept on the best of terms, I was taken into Monsieur Picot's service.

"My new master's fortune is a long story, and I am describing it to Monsieur because another person, in whose matrimonial affairs Madame de Godollo was interested, is mixed up in it. This other person is the man known as Félix Phellion, inventor of a star. From despair at not being able to marry the young lady intended for Monsieur de la Peyrade, he started off to England to embark on a voyage round the world, which was a very lover-like idea.

Hearing of his departure, Monsieur Picot, his old master, who is much attached to him, immediately followed him to prevent this madcap expedition, which he did easily enough. The English are very jealous about foreign voyages of discovery, and, when they saw Monsieur Phellion go on board with their own explorers, they asked him if he had a permit from the admiralty. As he was unable to produce one, they laughed at him, and sailed away without him, for fear he should find out more than themselves.

"Telemachus and his mentor were preparing to return to France, when Monsieur Picot received a letter such as only an Englishwoman would be capable of writing. The lady said she had read his 'Theory of Perpetual Motion'; that she had heard of his wonderful discovery of a star; that she looked upon him as a genius at least equal to Newton; that if the hand that wrote the letter and a marriage portion of eighty thousand pounds (or two millions of francs) were acceptable, both were at his disposal. Monsieur Picot was flattered by the offer, and met the lady by appointment, to find she was at least forty years old, had a red nose and large teeth, and wore glasses. The professor's first impulse was to make his pupil marry her; but, seeing this was impossible, before acceding on his own account he stated that he was old, three-quarters blind, not the discoverer of a star, and not blessed with a single sou. The Englishwoman answered that Milton was not young either, and entirely blind; that Monsieur Picot only appeared to have a cataract; that she knew all about it, being a surgeon's daughter, and would get the operation performed; that she was not particular about his having discovered a star; that it was the author of 'Perpetual Motion' who for ten years had been the idol of her soul, and whom

she was now offering her hand, with a marriage portion of eighty thousand pounds (or two millions of francs). Monsieur Picot replied that if his eyesight were restored, and the lady consented to live in Paris, since he hated England, he would allow himself to be married. The operation was performed, and well performed, and three weeks after the newly wed couple arrived in our capital. All these details I learned from Madame Picot's maid, with whom I stand very well.

"But what remains to be told you, Monsieur, are facts of which I can write as an eye-witness, and consequently can swear to. As soon as Monsieur and Madame Picot had finished furnishing their apartment, which they did in the grandest and most luxurious style, my master gave me a quantity of invitations to dinner, for the Thuillier, Colleville, and Minard families, for the Abbé Gondrin, the rector of the Madeleine Church, and in fact for nearly all the guests who had been present at a dinner given by the Thuilliers a month before, and where he had 'happened in,' and behaved in a rather extraordinary manner. All who got invitations were so astonished that Monsieur Picot had made a rich marriage, and was occupying the Thuilliers' floor, that they went to the porter, Monsieur Pascal, to see if they were not being made the victims of a hoax. But the information rendered sounding true and reliable the whole company went to the place. They did not see Monsieur Picot at first, but were received by Madame Picot, who speaks very little French, not more than enough to say to each arriving guest, 'My husband will be here presently.' At last, Monsieur Picot came in, and everybody was amazed to see, instead of a shabby old blind man, a fine, good-looking, sprightly old gentleman, carrying his years quite gayly.

"'I beg your pardon, ladies,' he said, 'for not being here to meet you; but I have just come from the Academy of Science, where I was waiting to hear the result of an election—Monsieur Félix Phellion's, whom you all know, and who was unanimously elected by all but three votes.'

"This piece of news seemed to impress the company, and Monsieur Picot went on—'I must also, ladies, make my apologies for my rather unusual conduct, some weeks ago, on this very spot. My excuse is my infirmity, the worries of a lawsuit, and an old housekeeper, who was robbing me and tormenting me in a hundred ways, and of whom I have fortunately got rid. To-day, you see me rejuvenated and rich by the generosity of the amiable woman who has bestowed her hand on me, and I should be glad to entertain you in the right manner, were it not that the recollection of my young friend, who has been lifted to fame by his admission to the Academy of Science, casts a cloud of sorrow over my mind. All of us here were unfair to him. I was guilty of ingratitude when he ascribed his glorious discovery to me, and earned me the fruits of his immortal efforts; that young lady I observe over there, with tears in her eyes, foolishly accused him of atheism; that other lady, with a severe countenance, harshly rejected a dignified offer made on the young man's behalf by his father, whose white hair she would have done better to respect; Monsieur Thuillier sacrificed Félix to his own ambition; Monsieur Colleville forgot his father's part, which was, to choose his daughter the worthiest and most honorable husband; Monsieur Minard jealously tried to push his son into his place. Only two people here, Madame Thuillier and Monsieur the Abbé Gondrin did him full justice! Very well—I ask that godly man—is one not sometimes tempted to doubt Divine good-

ness when this fine young man, the victim of us all, is at the present moment being tossed by sea and tempest, and when we shall be left in anxiety for his safe return three long years?'

"'The Lord is all-powerful,' replied the Abbé, 'and He will protect Monsieur Félix in the midst of peril, and in three years, I firmly believe, he will be restored to his friends.'

"'But will it not be too late, in three years? Will Mademoiselle Colleville wait so long?'

"'Yes, I swear to wait!' cried the girl, carried away by a rush of feeling she could not control. And then she sat down again, shamefaced and weeping.

"'And you, Mademoiselle Thuillier, and you, Madame Colleville?' continued Monsieur Picot, 'will you allow this child to wait for him who is so worthy of her?'

"'Yes! Oh, yes!' was the universal cry; for Monsieur Picot's voice, which is deep and sonorous, and which sounded as though tears were in it, had profoundly stirred the emotions of all assembled.

"'It is time, then,' said Monsieur Picot, 'to grant Providence an amnesty.' And going to the door, where he nearly caught me listening, he gave me this order in a very loud voice—'Announce Monsieur Félix Phellion and family!'

"And through another door, which then opened, came five or six persons, who followed Monsieur Picot into the drawing-room. At the sight of her lover, Mademoiselle Colleville fell into a faint, but it only lasted a minute, and, beholding Monsieur Félix on his knees, she threw herself into Madame Thuillier's arms, exclaiming—'Godmother, you always told me to hope!'

"Mademoiselle Thuillier, whom I have always taken to

be a superior woman, in spite of her rough character and defective education, then had a handsome inspiration. Just as a movement toward the dining-room began, 'One moment!' said she. And going up to Phellion, the father, she continued—'My dear old friend, I ask you, in the name of Mademoiselle Céleste Colleville, our adopted daughter, for the hand of Monsieur Félix Phellion in marriage!'

"'Well done! Well done!' cried everybody.

"'Heavens!' exclaimed Monsieur Félix, with wet eyes, 'what have I done to deserve such happiness?'

"'You have been an honest man and a Christian without knowing it,' said the Abbé Gondrin."

Here, la Peyrade threw down the report.

"Why do you not finish it?" said Corentin. "But there is nothing more, in fact. Monsieur Henri confesses to being touched by this scene, and says that, as I was once interested in the marriage, he thought best to inform me of all the circumstances. And he concludes, as the custom is in all lengthy police reports, with a thinly veiled request for a cash bonus. I forgot, though," added Corentin, "to mention an important item. At dinner, the English woman made Monsieur Picot announce that, having no heirs, upon her husband's decease and her own her whole fortune would go to Félix, who will thus be a very rich man."

La Peyrade had got up, and was pacing the room with long steps.

"Well," said Corentin, "what is the matter?"

"Nothing."

"Yes, I think you are a little jealous of the young man's good luck. But, my dear fellow, allow me to tell you, that if you wished the result he attained you ought to have set about matters in the same way that he did. When I sent

you a hundred louis to help you in your law studies, I had not picked you out for my successor; if you had rowed laboriously in your galley, and had braved obscure and painful toil, your day would have come. But you insisted on doing violence to fate. I mean to say that you cut your crop green. You went into journalism, and thence into business. You made the acquaintance of Monsieur Cérizet and Monsieur Dutocq, and I frankly acknowledge you have been fortunate in reaching the harbor of refuge that now shelters you. In any case, you are not simple-hearted enough ever to have been greatly delighted with the joys open to Félix Phellion. These middle class people—"

"The middle classes!" said la Peyrade. "I know them now, and that at my own expense. They are often very absurd, and have great vices, but they have virtues also, or to say the least, estimable qualities; in them lies the vital force of our corrupt society."

"Your society!" said Corentin, smiling. "You speak as though you were still in its ranks. You are off the list, my dear boy, and ought to be better satisfied with your lot. Governments pass away, and societies perish or pale, but we —we dominate them all; for the POLICE is eternal!"

A PASSION IN THE DESERT

I WAS AT the menagerie. The first time I saw Monsieur Martin enter the cages I uttered an exclamation of surprise. I found myself next to an old soldier with the right leg amputated, who had come in with me. His face had attracted my attention. He had one of those intrepid heads stamped with the seal of warfare, and on which the battles of Napoleon are written. Besides, he had that frank, good-humored expression that always impresses me favorably. He was without doubt one of those troopers who are surprised at nothing, who find matter for laughter in the contortions of a dying comrade, who bury or plunder him quite light-heartedly, who stand intrepidly in the way of bullets—in fact, one of those men who waste no time in deliberation, and would not hesitate to make friends with the devil himself. After looking very attentively at the proprietor of the menagerie getting out of his box, my companion pursed up his lips with an air of mockery and contempt, with that peculiar and expressive twist which superior people assume to show they are not taken in. Then, when I was expatiating on the courage of Monsieur Martin, he smiled, shook his head knowingly, and said, "Easy enough!"

"How 'easy enough'?" I said. "If you would only explain me the mystery I should be obliged."

After a few minutes, during which we made acquaint-

ance, we went to dine at the first *restaurateur's* whose shop caught our eye. At dessert a bottle of champagne completely refreshed and brightened up the memories of this odd old soldier. He told me his story as follows:

During the expedition in Upper Egypt under General Desaix, a Provençal soldier fell into the hands of the Mangrabins, and was taken by these Arabs into the deserts beyond the falls of the Nile.

In order to place a sufficient distance between themselves and the French army, the Mangrabins made forced marches and only rested during the night. They camped round a well overshadowed by palm trees, under which they had previously concealed a store of provisions. Not surmising that the notion of flight would occur to their prisoner, they contented themselves with binding his hands, and after eating a few dates, and given provender to their horses, went to sleep.

When the brave Provençal saw that his enemies were no longer watching him, he made use of his teeth to steal a cimeter, fixed the blade between his knees, and cut the cords which prevented him using his hands; in a moment he was free. He at once seized a rifle and a dagger, then taking the precaution to provide himself with a sack of dried dates, oats, and powder and shot, and to fasten a cimeter to his waist, he leaped on to a horse and spurred on vigorously in the direction where he thought to find the French army. So impatient was he to see a bivouac again that he pressed on the already tired courser at such speed that its flanks were lacerated with his spurs, and at last the poor animal died, leaving the Frenchman alone in the desert.

After walking some time in the sand with all the courage of an escaped convict, the soldier was obliged to stop, as

the day had already ended. In spite of the beauty of an Oriental sky at night, he felt he had not strength enough to go on. Fortunately he had been able to find a small hill, on the summit of which a few palm trees shot up into the air; it was their verdure seen from afar which had brought hope and consolation to his heart. His fatigue was so great that he lay down upon a rock of granite, capriciously cut out like a camp-bed; there he fell asleep without taking any precaution to defend himself while he slept. He had made the sacrifice of his life. His last thought was one of regret. He repented having left the Mangrabins, whose nomad life seemed to smile on him now that he was far from them and without help. He was awakened by the sun, whose pitiless rays fell with all their force on the granite and produced an intolerable heat—for he had had the stupidity to place himself inversely to the shadow thrown by the verdant majestic heads of the palm trees. He looked at the solitary trees and shuddered—they reminded him of the graceful shafts crowned with foliage which characterize the Saracen columns in the cathedral of Arles.

But when, after counting the palm trees, he cast his eyes around him, the most horrible despair was infused into his soul. Before him stretched an ocean without limit. The dark sand of the desert spread further than sight could reach in every direction, and glittered like steel struck with bright light. It might have been a sea of looking-glass, or lakes melted together in a mirror. A fiery vapor carried up in streaks made a perpetual whirlwind over the quivering land. The sky was lighted with an Oriental splendor of insupportable purity, leaving naught for the imagination to desire. Heaven and earth were on fire.

The silence was awful in its wild and terrible majesty.

Infinity, immensity, closed in upon the soul from every side. Not a cloud in the sky, not a breath in the air, not a flaw on the bosom of the sand, ever moving in diminutive waves; the horizon ended as at sea on a clear day, with one line of light, definite as the cut of a sword.

The Provençal threw his arms round the trunk of one of the palm trees, as though it were the body of a friend, and then, in the shelter of the thin straight shadow that the palm cast upon the granite, he wept. Then sitting down he remained as he was, contemplating with profound sadness the implacable scene, which was all he had to look upon. He cried aloud, to measure the solitude. His voice, lost in the hollows of the hill, sounded faintly and aroused no echo—the echo was in his own heart. The Provençal was twenty-two years old—he loaded his carbine.

"There'll be time enough," he said to himself, laying on the ground the weapon which alone could bring him deliverance.

Looking by turns at the black expanse and the blue expanse, the soldier dreamed of France—he smelled with delight the gutters of Paris—he remembered the towns through which he had passed, the faces of his fellow-soldiers, the most minute details of his life. His southern fancy soon showed him the stones of his beloved Provence, in the play of the heat which waved over the spread sheet of the desert. Fearing the danger of this cruel mirage, he went down the opposite side of the hill to that by which he had come up the day before. The remains of a rug showed that this place of refuge had at one time been inhabited; at a short distance he saw some palm trees full of dates. Then the instinct which binds us to life awoke again in his heart. He hoped to live long enough to await

the passing of some Arabs, or perhaps he might hear the sound of cannon; for at this time Bonaparte was traversing Egypt.

This thought gave him new life. The palm tree seemed to bend with the weight of the ripe fruit. He shook some of it down. When he tasted this unhoped-for manna, he felt sure that the palms had been cultivated by a former inhabitant—the savory, fresh meat of the dates were proof of the care of his predecessor. He passed suddenly from dark despair to an almost insane joy. He went up again to the top of the hill, and spent the rest of the day in cutting down one of the sterile palm trees, which the night before had served him for shelter. A vague memory made him think of the animals of the desert; and in case they might come to drink at the spring, visible from the base of the rocks but lost further down, he resolved to guard himself from their visits by placing a barrier at the entrance of his hermitage.

In spite of his diligence, and the strength which the fear of being devoured asleep gave him, he was unable to cut the palm in pieces, though he succeeded in cutting it down. At eventide the king of the desert fell; the sound of its fall resounded far and wide, like a sigh in the solitude; the soldier shuddered as though he had heard some voice predicting woe.

But like an heir who does not long bewail a deceased parent, he tore off from this beautiful tree the tall broad green leaves which are its poetic adornment, and used them to mend the mat on which he was to sleep.

Fatigued by the heat and his work, he fell asleep under the red curtains of his wet cave.

In the middle of the night his sleep was troubled by an

extraordinary noise; he sat up, and the deep silence around allowed him to distinguish the alternative accents of a respiration whose savage energy could not belong to a human creature.

A profound terror, increased still further by the darkness, the silence, and his waking images, froze his heart within him. He almost felt his hair stand on end, when by straining his eyes to their utmost he perceived through the shadow two faint yellow lights. At first he attributed these lights to the reflection of his own pupils, but soon the vivid brilliance of the night aided him gradually to distinguish the objects around him in the cave, and he beheld a huge animal lying but two steps from him. Was it a lion, a tiger, or a crocodile?

The Provençal was not educated enough to know under what species his enemy ought to be classed; but his fright was all the greater, as his ignorance led him to imagine all terrors at once; he endured a cruel torture, noting every variation of the breathing close to him without daring to make the slightest movement. An odor, pungent like that of a fox, but more penetrating, profounder—so to speak—filled the cave, and when the Provençal became sensible of this his terror reached its height, for he could no longer doubt the proximity of a terrible companion, whose royal dwelling served him for a shelter.

Presently the reflection of the moon descending on the horizon, lighted up the den, rendering gradually visible and resplendent the spotted skin of a panther.

This lion of Egypt slept, curled up like a big dog, the peaceful possessor of a sumptuous niche at the gate of a hotel; its eyes opened for a moment and closed again; its face was turned toward the man. A thousand confused

thoughts passed through the Frenchman's mind; first he thought of killing it with a bullet from his gun, but he saw there was not enough distance between them for him to take proper aim—the shot would miss the mark. And if it were to wake!—the thought made his limbs rigid. He listened to his own heart beating in the midst of the silence, and cursed the too violent pulsations which the flow of blood brought on, fearing to disturb that sleep which allowed him time to think of some means of escape.

Twice he placed his hand on his cimeter, intending to cut off the head of his enemy; but the difficulty of cutting the stiff short hair compelled him to abandon this daring project. To miss would be to die for certain, he thought; he preferred the chances of fair fight, and made up his mind to wait till morning; the morning did not leave him long to wait.

He could now examine the panther at ease; its muzzle was smeared with blood.

"She's had a good dinner," he thought, without troubling himself as to whether her feast might have been on human flesh. "She won't be hungry when she gets up."

It was a female. The fur on her belly and flanks was glistening white; many small marks like velvet formed beautiful bracelets round her feet; her sinuous tail was also white, ending with black rings; the overpart of her dress, yellow like unburnished gold, very lissome and soft, had the characteristic blotches in the form of rosettes which distinguish the panther from every other feline species.

This tranquil and formidable hostess snored in an attitude as graceful as that of a cat lying on a cushion. Her blood-stained paws, nervous and well-armed, were stretched out before her face, which rested upon them, and from

which radiated her straight slender whiskers, like threads of silver.

If she had been like that in a cage, the Provençal would doubtless have admired the grace of the animal, and the vigorous contrasts of vivid color which gave her robe an imperial splendor; but just then his sight was troubled by her sinister appearance.

The presence of the panther, even asleep, could not fail to produce the effect which the magnetic eyes of the serpent are said to have on the nightingale.

For a moment the courage of the soldier began to fail before this danger, though no doubt it would have risen at the mouth of a cannon charged with shell. Nevertheless, a bold thought brought daylight to his soul and sealed up the source of the cold sweat which sprang forth on his brow. Like men driven to bay, who defy death and offer their body to the smiter, so he, seeing in this merely a tragic episode, resolved to play his part with honor to the last.

"The day before yesterday the Arabs would have killed me perhaps," he said; so considering himself as good as dead already, he waited bravely, with excited curiosity, his enemy's awakening.

When the sun appeared, the panther suddenly opened her eyes; then she put out her paws with energy, as if to stretch them and get rid of cramp. At last she yawned, showing the formidable apparatus of her teeth and pointed tongue, rough as a file.

She licked off the blood which stained her paws and muzzle, and scratched her head with reiterated gestures full of prettiness.

"All right, make a little toilet," the Frenchman said to himself, beginning to recover his gayety with his courage;

"we'll say good-morning to each other presently," and he seized the small short dagger which he had taken from the Mangrabins. At this moment the panther turned her head toward the man and looked at him fixedly without moving.

The rigidity of her metallic eyes and their insupportable lustre made him shudder, especially when the animal walked toward him. But he looked at her caressingly, staring into her eyes in order to magnetize her, and let her come quite close to him; then with a movement both gentle and affectionate, as though he were caressing the most beautiful of women, he passed his hand over her whole body, from the head to the tail, scratching the flexible vertebræ which divided the panther's yellow back. The animal waved her tail, and her eyes grew gentle; and when for the third time the Frenchman accomplished this interested flattery, she gave forth one of those purrings by which our cats express their pleasure; but this murmur issued from a throat so powerful and so deep that it resounded through the cave like the last vibrations of an organ in a church. The man, understanding the importance of his caresses, redoubled them.

When he felt sure of having extinguished the ferocity of his capricious companion, whose hunger had so fortunately been satisfied the day before, he got up to go out of the cave; the panther let him go out, but when he had reached the summit of the hill she sprang with the lightness of a sparrow hopping from twig to twig, and rubbed herself against his legs, putting up her back after the manner of all the race of cats. Then regarding her guest with eyes whose glare had softened a little, she gave vent to that wild cry which naturalists compare to the grating of a saw.

"She is exacting," said the Frenchman, smiling.

He was bold enough to play with her ears; he scratched her head as hard as he could. When he saw he was successful he tickled her skull with the point of his dagger, watching for the moment to kill her, but the hardness of her bones made him tremble for his success.

The sultana of the desert showed herself gracious to her slave; she lifted her head, stretched out her neck, and manifested her delight by the tranquillity of her attitude. It suddenly occurred to the soldier that to kill this savage princess with one blow he must poniard her in the throat.

He raised the blade, when the panther, satisfied, no doubt, laid herself gracefully at his feet, and cast up at him glances in which, in spite of their natural fierceness, was mingled confusedly a kind of good-will. The poor Provençal ate his dates, leaning against one of the palm trees, and casting his eyes alternately on the desert in quest of some liberator and on his terrible companion to watch her uncertain clemency.

The panther looked at the place where the date stones fell, and every time that he threw one down, her eyes expressed an incredible mistrust.

She examined the man with an almost commercial prudence. However, this examination was favorable to him, for when he had finished his meagre meal she licked his boots with her powerful rough tongue, brushing off with marvellous skill the dust gathered in the creases.

"Ah, but when she's really hungry!" thought the Frenchman.

In spite of the shudder this thought caused him, the soldier began to measure curiously the proportions of the panther, certainly one of the most splendid specimens of its race. She was three feet high and four feet long without

counting her tail; this powerful weapon, rounded like a cudgel, was nearly three feet long. The head, large as that of a lioness, was distinguished by a rare expression of refinement. The cold cruelty of a tiger was dominant, it was true, but there was also a vague resemblance to the face of a sensual woman.

Indeed, the face of this solitary queen had something of the gayety of a drunken Nero: she had satiated herself with blood, and she wanted to play.

The soldier tried if he might walk up and down, and the panther left him free, contenting herself with following him with her eyes, less like a faithful dog than a big Angora cat, observing everything, and every movement of her master.

When he looked round, he saw, by the spring, the remains of his horse; the panther had dragged the carcass all that way; about two-thirds of it had been devoured already. The sight reassured him.

It was easy to explain the panther's absence, and the respect she had had for him while he slept. The first piece of good luck emboldened him to tempt the future, and he conceived the wild hope of continuing on good terms with the panther during the entire day, neglecting no means of taming her and remaining in her good graces.

He returned to her, and had the unspeakable joy of seeing her wag her tail with an almost imperceptible movement at his approach. He sat down then, without fear, by her side, and they began to play together; he took her paws and muzzle, pulled her ears, rolled her over on her back, stroked her warm, delicate flanks. She let him do whatever he liked, and when he began to stroke the hair on her feet she drew her claws in carefully.

The man, keeping the dagger in one hand, thought to

plunge it into the belly of the too confiding panther, but he was afraid that he would be immediately strangled in her last convulsive struggle; besides, he felt in his heart a sort of remorse which bid him respect a creature that had done him no harm. He seemed to have found a friend in a boundless desert; half unconsciously he thought of his first sweetheart, whom he had nicknamed "Mignonne" by way of contrast, because she was so atrociously jealous, that all the time of their love he was in fear of the knife with which she had always threatened him.

This memory of his early days suggested to him the idea of making the young panther answer to this name, now that he began to admire with less terror her swiftness, suppleness, and softness. Toward the end of the day he had familiarized himself with his perilous position; he now almost liked the painfulness of it. At last his companion had got into the habit of looking up at him whenever he cried in a falsetto voice, "Mignonne."

At the setting of the sun Mignonne gave, several times running, a profound melancholy cry.

"She's been well brought up," said the light-hearted soldier; "she says her prayers." But this mental joke only occurred to him when he noticed what a pacific attitude his companion remained in. "Come, *ma petite blonde*, I'll let you go to bed first," he said to her, counting on the activity of his own legs to run away as quickly as possible, directly she was asleep, and seek another shelter for the night.

The soldier awaited with impatience the hour of his flight, and when it had arrived he walked vigorously in the direction of the Nile; but hardly had he made a quarter of a league in the sand when he heard the panther bounding

after him, crying with that sawlike cry, more dreadful even than the sound of her leaping.

"Ah!" he said, "then she's taken a fancy to me; she has never met any one before, and it is really quite flattering to have her first love."

That instant the man fell into one of those movable quicksands so terrible to travellers and from which it is impossible to save one's self. Feeling himself caught, he gave a shriek of alarm; the panther seized him with her teeth by the collar, and, springing vigorously backward, drew him, as if by magic, out of the whirling sand.

"Ah, Mignonne!" cried the soldier, caressing her enthusiastically; "we're bound together for life and death—but no jokes, mind!" and he retraced his steps.

From that time the desert seemed inhabited. It contained a being to whom the man could talk, and whose ferocity was rendered gentle by him, though he could not explain to himself the reason for their strange friendship. Great as was the soldier's desire to stay up on guard, he slept.

On awakening he could not find Mignonne; he mounted the hill, and in the distance saw her springing toward him after the habit of these animals, who cannot run on account of the extreme flexibility of the vertebral column. Mignonne arrived, her jaws covered with blood; she received the wonted caress of her companion, showing with much purring how happy it made her. Her eyes, full of languor, turned still more gently than the day before toward the Provençal, who talked to her as one would to a tame animal.

"Ah! mademoiselle, you are a nice girl, aren't you? Just look at that! so we like to be made much of, don't

we? Aren't you ashamed of yourself? So you have been eating some Arab or other, have you? That doesn't matter. They're animals just the same as you are; but don't you take to eating Frenchmen, or I shan't like you any longer."

She played like a dog with its master, letting herself be rolled over, knocked about, and stroked, alternately; sometimes she herself would provoke the soldier, putting up her paw with a soliciting gesture.

Some days passed in this manner. This companionship permitted the Provençal to appreciate the sublime beauty of the desert; now that he had a living thing to think about, alternations of fear and quiet, and plenty to eat, his mind became filled with contrasts, and his life began to be diversified.

Solitude revealed to him all her secrets, and enveloped him in her delights. He discovered in the rising and setting of the sun sights unknown to the world. He knew what it was to tremble when he heard over his head the hiss of a bird's wings, so rarely did they pass, or when he saw the clouds, changing and many-colored travellers, melt into one another. He studied in the night time the effects of the moon upon the ocean of sand, where the simoom made waves swift of movement and rapid in their change. He lived the life of the Eastern day, marvelling at its wonderful pomp; then, after having revelled in the sight of a hurricane over the plain where the whirling sands made red, dry mists and death-bearing clouds, he would welcome the night with joy, for then fell the healthful freshness of the stars, and he listened to imaginary music in the skies. Then solitude taught him to unroll the treasures of dreams. He passed whole hours in remembering mere nothings, and comparing his present life with his past.

At last he grew passionately fond of the tigress; for some sort of affection was a necessity.

Whether it was that his will powerfully projected had modified the character of his companion, or whether, because she found abundant food in her predatory excursions in the deserts, she respected the man's life, he began to fear for it no longer, seeing her so well tamed.

He devoted the greater part of his time to sleep, but he was obliged to watch like a spider in its web that the moment of his deliverance might not escape him, if any one should pass the line marked by the horizon. He had sacrificed his shirt to make a flag with, which he hung at the top of a palm tree, whose foliage he had torn off. Taught by necessity, he found the means of keeping it spread out, by fastening it with little sticks; for the wind might not be blowing at the moment when the passing traveller was looking through the desert.

It was during the long hours, when he had abandoned hope, that he amused himself with the panther. He had come to learn the different inflections of her voice, the expressions of her eyes; he had studied the capricious patterns of all the rosettes which marked the gold of her robe. Mignonne was not even angry when he took hold of the tuft at the end of her tail to count the rings, those graceful ornaments which glittered in the sun like jewelry. It gave him pleasure to contemplate the supple, fine outlines of her form, the graceful pose of her head. But it was especially when she was playing that he felt most pleasure in looking at her; the agility and youthful lightness of her movements were a continual surprise to him; he wondered at the supple way which she jumped and climbed, washed herself and arranged her fur, crouched down and prepared to spring.

However rapid her spring might be, however slippery the stone she was on, she would always stop short at the word "Mignonne."

One day, in a bright mid-day sun, an enormous bird coursed through the air. The man left his panther to look at this new guest; but after waiting a moment the deserted sultana growled deeply.

"My goodness! I do believe she's jealous," he cried, seeing her eyes become hard again; "the soul of Virginie has passed into her body, that's certain."

The eagle disappeared into the air, while the soldier admired the curved contour of the panther.

But there was such youth and grace in her form! she was beautiful as a woman! the blond fur of her robe mingled well with the delicate tints of faint white which marked her flanks. The profuse light cast down by the sun made this living gold, these russet markings, to burn in a way to give them an indefinable attraction.

The man and the panther looked at one another with a look full of meaning; the coquette quivered when she felt her friend stroke her head; her eyes flashed like lightning —then she shut them tightly.

"She has a soul," he said, looking at the stillness of this queen of the sands, golden like them, white like them, solitary and burning like them.

Ah! how did it all end?

Alas; as all great passions do end—in a misunderstanding. From some reason *one* suspects the other of treason: they don't come to an explanation through pride, and quarrel and part from sheer obstinacy. Yet sometimes at the best moments a single word or a look are enough.

"Well," the old fellow continued, "with her sharp teeth she one day caught hold of my leg—gently, I dare say; but I, thinking she would devour me, plunged my dagger into her throat. She rolled over, giving a cry that froze my heart; and I saw her dying, still looking at me without anger. I would have given all the world—my cross even, which I had not got then—to have brought her to life again. It was as though I had murdered a real person; and the soldiers who had seen my flag, and were come to my assistance, found me in tears.

"Well, sir," he said, after a moment of silence, "since then I have been in war in Germany, in Spain, in Russia, in France; I've certainly carried my carcass about a good deal, but never have I seen anything like the desert. Ah! yes, it is very beautiful!"

"What did you feel there?" I asked him.

"Oh! that can't be described, young man! Besides, I am not always regretting my palm trees and my panther. I should have to be very melancholy for that. In the desert, you see, there is everything, and nothing."

"Yes, but explain—"

"Well," he said, with an impatient gesture, "it is God without mankind."

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